

**Food for Thought: a visual investigation of the  
nature-culture dichotomy as manifested in 'farm' animals.**

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Yvette Watt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'Y' and a long, sweeping underline.

Yvette Watt

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Yvette Watt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'Y' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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## ABSTRACT

The project has involved the production of artworks that explore our relationship to 'farm' animals within increasingly urban Western societies.

The investigation proposes that farm animals, whose form is continuously changed by human intervention, bridge the nature-culture dichotomy, as they are seen simultaneously as natural *and* 'man-made'. The issues were approached through analysis and quotation of popular forms of representation of farm animals such as plastic models and photographs. These objects and images, which inform our understanding of and relationship to these animals from an early age, manifest the transformation of the animal from nature to culture. The use of secondary sources of imagery also allowed for explorations of the relationship between depiction and understanding, whereby the manner in which the animal is represented might be seen to reflect a society's attitudes towards the animal. The objective resulted in a suite of works that reflect the complexity of this dichotomy and the conventions on which it is based.

This research has as its background an abiding interest in human-animal relationships and the representation of animals in art and popular culture; and reflects a specific concern about urban societies' growing distance from, and attendant ignorance of, the lives of farmed 'food' animals. The research also acknowledges the long tradition of animal painting; a tradition that has for some time been relegated to a lowly position within the hierarchy of important subject matter for artists. It is argued in the exegesis that, although there has been something of a resurgence of interest in animals as subject matter within contemporary art, this interest rarely extends to farm animals. The project seeks to redress this imbalance through art works that encourage the viewer to question their understanding of these animals and their relationship to them.

The final body of work is in the form of oil paintings based on photographs of crude, mass-produced plastic models of farm animals. The layered artificiality of these paintings of mutant-looking models reflects the described, detached, objectified human/farm-animal relationship while also alluding to the continual modification of the form of these animals through selective breeding and genetic engineering.



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## INTRODUCTION

I grew up in a suburban family that doted on family pets. We always had a dog and cat and would regularly take in strays that would be kept or re-homed, depending on circumstances. My older brother was particularly interested in animals. He had a family of mice for a while and later kept native parrots in a backyard aviary. One birthday when I was nine or ten he bought me two budgerigars which, in the space of a few years, I had encouraged to breed until I had more than sixty birds. I would spend hours on weekends just sitting in the aviary watching them, fascinated by their breeding cycle, the complexity of their relationships and their individual personalities. I was equally interested in the life cycle of the various bugs and butterflies in the garden and went so far as to set up a kind of 'laboratory' in a friend's back shed where we studied the life cycle of butterflies and dissected dead insects we had found. Among certain primary school friends I earned the nickname of 'the naturalist', a title I was simultaneously embarrassed about and proud to be given.

One of my fondest memories from childhood relates to one summer when my older brother, who was passionately interested in native birds, coached me as I copied pictures from his field guide to Australian birds with coloured chalk on my blackboard. I'm not sure precisely how old I was – perhaps eight or nine – but I do remember the joy of depicting the colourful birds as accurately as my skills - and the limitations of my chosen media - would allow. Each drawing seemed to take hours and the whole process took weeks, as I would fill the blackboard, then rub the drawings off so I could start another batch. A year or two later my mother invested in the *Animal World Encyclopaedia*, which was serialised, so that each week I would wait with great anticipation for the next issue. I read all the articles and marvelled at the pictures. I still have all of the issues and refer to them from time to time for my artwork.

By the time I was twelve, I had developed a typical schoolgirl passion for horses. My parents were not able to buy me a horse (although from the age of 16 until 21 I did eventually have a horse), but on weekends my father would take me to the mounted police stables a few kilometres from home where I was allowed to sketch the horses, many of whom I knew by name. I still have a sketchbook from this time that I filled with studies of horse movement, plotting each stage of the gallop by cutting out and making studies of horses on the racing pages of the newspaper.

It is not surprising then that animals and human-animal relationships have been the primary subject matter of my work for almost twenty years. The artworks produced throughout this period used the language of mythology in both appearance and content and, although the works rarely referred to specific myths, they did rely heavily on the use of archetypal symbols. This approach to the work had its basis in a period around 1983/84 when, toward the end of undergraduate studies, I began recording and analysing my dreams. In doing so I became aware that my dreams were regularly populated with a variety of animals. Despite the fact that animals had played just as important a role in my waking life, I had not yet considered them potential subject matter for my adult work. The dreams and consequent research into mythology and symbolism alerted me to their importance both in my own life, and in the mythology of virtually every human society. In the final semester of undergraduate studies a series of five linocuts were made of animals chosen for their archetypal symbolic references. These were a snake, a chameleon, a raven, a fish and a cat<sup>1</sup>. Up until the recent change in my work, four of these animals, the bird, cat, fish and snake, remained the core of the animal imagery I used.



1. Yvette Watt, *From my Bestiary series*, lino-cuts, 1984.

While writing this paper I began to wonder why animals *stopped* being subject matter for my work for the first few years of my undergraduate study. Was it because artists who took animals as the subject matter for their work were all but absent from the history of art as taught to me? Did this have a subliminal effect on my understanding of what constituted worthy subject matter for an artist?

I recall in my final year of undergraduate study suggesting to my Art Theory lecturer that I would like to write an essay on the subject of animals in art. He counselled me against this, but I persisted, and submitted a paper titled *Animal Symbolism in the Art of Franz Marc and George Stubbs*. I found this essay recently and noted that the mark he gave (an A-) and his written remarks acknowledged that my paper was of

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<sup>1</sup> *From My Bestiary series*, 1984.

some worth, but that he had commented, “I wasn’t inclined to think it a very promising topic”. The ‘unpromising subject’ of animals in art has since become one of the driving forces in my work in general, and this research project in particular.

## PART ONE – THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

### Aims of the project

My abiding interest in the complexity of human-animal<sup>2</sup> relationships and the representation of animals in art and popular culture has contributed to a specific interest in the relationship between humans and the animals primarily farmed for food, such as cows, pigs, sheep and chickens. I am troubled by urban societies' growing distance from and attendant ignorance of the lives of these farmed 'food' animals; a concern which arises from a long-term involvement with the animal rights movement and ongoing research into the sociological implications of human-animal relationships.

The aim of the research project was to produce artworks that explore our relationship to 'farm' animals within increasingly urban Western societies. It is proposed that these animals, whose form is continuously changed by human intervention, bridge the nature-culture dichotomy, as they are seen simultaneously as 'natural' and 'man-made'.<sup>3</sup> The objective was to produce a body of work that reflects the complexity of this dichotomy and the conventions on which it is based through analysis and quotation of popular forms of representation of farm animals such as plastic models and photographs.

### Parameters of the investigation

While the research is broadly informed by the general representation of animals in art and culture from prehistory until the current day, the specific focus of this project is on the most common 'farm' or 'food'<sup>4</sup> animals in modern<sup>5</sup> western societies. This reflects my own position as an urban-dwelling Australian, whose understanding of animal agricultural practices is based primarily on information received through secondary sources. As such, models, toys and photographs are the primary source of imagery for this project as they embody this mediated experience of the animal.

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<sup>2</sup> Although I recognise that the term 'animal' includes humans, for the sake of brevity I will rely on the conventional (although problematic) use of the word to refer specifically to non-human animals.

<sup>3</sup> I use the word 'natural' to mean non-human, although this is merely a convenience as clearly humans are a part of the 'natural' world. However the central argument of this research focuses on the constructed dichotomy regarding nature and culture.

<sup>4</sup> 'Farm animal' is used as a convenient but problematic descriptor. The term tends to conjure up scenes of pastoral harmony that is not in keeping with modern farming practices, however the alternative of 'food animal' is not specific enough as it could refer to non-domestic or wild animals which are at times farmed and hunted for food.

<sup>5</sup> By 'modern' I mean the period from the early 1600s until the present day, which encompasses the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

This project is primarily subject driven and takes as its focus the visual representation of animals and how this representation reflects human attitudes toward them. The investigation is particularly concerned with the representation of the real animal as opposed to the symbolic or metaphorical animal, which commonly acts as a substitute human.

While the methods and form of the work are undeniably important, this has not been the driving force behind the project. There was some exploration into alternative ways of working, however the majority of the works are paintings with the approach taken to the painting process being one of refinement rather than experimentation. As a mode of expression painting has been at the core of my professional practice since the mid 1980s but is particularly appropriate in the context of this research project for the implicit references made, in the final body of work, to the animal painting genre through the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

### **The significance of the project.**

As evidenced by the Palaeolithic cave wall paintings in Spain and France, animals as subject matter for artists are one of the oldest sources of imagery known. In western art and society the depiction of these animals has altered as our relationship with them has changed.

In the shifting hierarchy of what is considered fashionable or worthy subject matter, animals have for several centuries been relegated to a rather lowly position. In her book on horse painter, George Stubbs, Venetia Morrison notes that in the eighteenth century this hierarchy of subject matter was strict and adhered to closely.

According to this convention, the painting of animals came a very poor last after the painting of historical subjects, portraits, genre scenes and landscapes. An artist who confined himself to the painting of horses was considered to possess only slightly greater status than a craftsman. This prejudice continued throughout the nineteenth century...<sup>6</sup>

I would argue that, to a certain extent, this prejudice continued well into the twentieth century<sup>7</sup> by which time animals were not only disappearing from peoples lives, they

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<sup>6</sup> V. Morrison, *The Art of George Stubbs*, Sandstone, London, 1989, p 7.

<sup>7</sup> The assertion is given credence in a statement by Sir Kenneth Clark in the foreword to his book *Animals and Men*. He writes:

This book originated in an invitation from ...the World Wildlife Fund, to write a book on animals in art. This by itself did not seem to me to constitute a subject, but on reflection it occurred to me that no one had ever given much

were also disappearing from art. In the first chapter of his book *The Postmodern Animal*<sup>8</sup>, Steve Baker addresses this issue in some detail, noting that Modernism, with its emphasis on formal issues and abstraction, was rarely interested in the animal form. Baker writes:

For modern art, the imperatives of formalism and abstraction rendered the image of the human difficult enough. The image of the animal was further hampered by memories of the unashamedly anthropomorphic sentiment of an earlier age, which could hardly have been more at odds with the values of the self-consciously serious modernist avante-gardes. The animal is the very first thing to be ruled out of modernism's bounds...So might begin a rather tedious listing of the animal's absence from much of the twentieth century's most adventurous and imaginative visual art.<sup>9</sup>

Baker suggests that this absence of the animal in Modernism has resulted in a persistent reluctance to reinstate the animal as important subject matter in more recent art. He quotes artist Mark Dion who states that 'in the slick world of Conceptual and media based art [of the early 1980s] no one seemed interested in the problems of nature'.<sup>10</sup>

In the last twenty years however, animals have enjoyed a gradual revival in popularity as subject matter for artists. On June 24, 2000, an article appeared in the New York Times titled 'Animals Have Taken Over Art, And Art Wonders Why: Metaphors Run Wild, but Sometimes a Cow Is Just a Cow'. The article detailed a number of recent exhibitions that included major works with animals as subject matter with the author stating that 'These days it seems every contemporary art exhibition must have its animal, dead or alive.'<sup>11</sup>

A number of artists and writers are now taking an interest in animals and human-animal relations; however it is significant that very few have animals as the primary focus of their work and even fewer are interested in the relationship between humans and the animals we farm and eat. It is this under-explored aspect of the human-

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thought to the relationship of animals and men, and that this might be a subject worth exploring. K. Clark, *Animals and Men*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1977, p 9.

<sup>8</sup> S. Baker, *The Postmodern Animal*, Reaktion, London, 2000, pp 7 – 25.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 20. Baker explains that the animals that were present in modernist art were explained away by modernist art criticism so that, for example, in the case of Picasso's *Guernica*, they were seen to function solely as political symbolism

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p 20.

<sup>11</sup> S. Boxer, 'Animals Have Taken Over Art, And Art Wonders Why: Metaphors Run Wild, but Sometimes a Cow Is Just a Cow', *New York Times*, June 24, 2000. I do not list a page number as the article was eventually sourced from the *New York Times* web site.



animal relationship that this project seeks to address, by investigating the connection between the visual representation of farm animals and society's attitude toward them.

### **The Farm Animal as Subject and Object**

This research project is particularly concerned with how the nature-culture dichotomy is evident in the way that farm animals are represented visually and thus it relies as source material for the practical investigation on the use of secondary sources such as photographs, models and toys. These objects and images, which may bear little resemblance to the animals themselves, inform our understanding of, and relationship to, these animals from an early age. The use of these secondary sources is of central importance to the project as it allows an exploration of the relationship between depiction and perception – i.e. the connection between the way the animal is represented and how this reflects the way a society, in general terms, thinks about and treats the animal. These common forms of imagery are also valuable for their transformative role whereby, through the act of representation, nature becomes culture. Kitty Hauser states; ‘...there can surely be no finer example of a non-consensual act of representation, of nature’s forced transformation into culture, than the stuffed animal’<sup>12</sup>. Model animals, toys and photographs of farm animals demonstrate a similar transformation in their ‘desire to control and possess the natural world’ that results in ‘an ever increasing distance between the sign and its referent’.<sup>13</sup>

This approach seeks to acknowledge the power of an image to affect our understanding of the animal represented. In discussing John Berger’s examination of the empowered gaze in *Why Look at Animals?*, Steve Baker concludes that ‘only by understanding who has power over the image can we begin to elaborate a worthwhile cultural history of the animal’.<sup>14</sup> Now more than ever in the history of humankind, our experience of the world is profoundly influenced by the overwhelming number of images that bombard our everyday lives and images of animals affect us both in their presence and in their absence. Our most common experience of the farm animal is on a dinner plate, but this is an absence, as much as it is a presence. In her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J Adams writes:

Behind every meal of meat is an absence: the death of the animal whose place the meat takes. The ‘absent referent’ is that which separates the meat eater from the animal and the animal from the end product. The function of the

<sup>12</sup> K. Hauser, ‘Coming Apart at the Seams’, *Make* No 82, Dec 98 - Feb 99, p 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* p 9 & 11.

<sup>14</sup> S. Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, Manchester University, Manchester, 1993, p15.

absent referent is to keep our 'meat' separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal, to keep the 'moo' or 'cluck' or 'baa' away from the meat, to keep the *something* from being seen as having been *someone*.<sup>15</sup>

Over the past three centuries increasing industrialisation and the consequent urbanisation of western societies has resulted in a removal of farm animals from our day-to-day lives, resulting in a separation in the relationship between production and consumption of animals for food.<sup>16</sup> As Adrian Franklin points out '...people of the twentieth century have become spatially detached from the animals they consume and emotionally reluctant to recognise the embodied nature of meat foods.'<sup>17</sup> A desire to detach ourselves from any involvement in the animal's death, to avoid the guilt we might otherwise feel, results in a range of 'distancing devices' that exist as both physical and psychological strategies which enable us to kill without concern.<sup>18</sup> The housing of animals such as pigs and chickens in giant sheds where they cannot be seen, the delegation of the killing and butchering of the animals to someone paid to do the job, the mechanisation of the animal agriculture industry, the use of terms such as 'beef', 'veal', 'pork', 'bacon', 'ham', 'mutton',<sup>19</sup> the negative connotations and uses of farm animals names (pig, cow, chicken, sheep), are all strategies for avoiding guilt. The result is that the animal becomes an object, a commodity that has been created by humans for a specific purpose and, as such, very little consideration is given to the animal's self-interest. In a legal sense, they are indeed objects that can be bought and sold, housed, fed and slaughtered without much concern for the animal. In his book *Dearest Pet*, Midas Dekkers recounts an example of a 'recent [court] case from Saxony' where a man was on trial, having raped a cow and a nine month old calf. He raped the calf first, but when he tried to rape the cow she kicked him, knocking him to the ground. Enraged, he took a manure fork and forced it into the anus of both the cow and the calf. The cow died shortly afterward and calf had to be put out of its misery the following day. The accused man was sentenced to two years and three months for damage to property.<sup>20</sup> Once understood primarily as property – as a commodity – the animal becomes difficult to accept as natural.

<sup>15</sup> C. J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Continuum, New York, 2000, p 14.

<sup>16</sup> A. Franklin, *Animals and Modern Cultures*, Sage, London, 1999, p 126.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p 126.

<sup>18</sup> For a thorough discussion of these 'distancing devices' and the origin of the term see J. Serpell, *In the Company of Animals*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, pp 186 – 211.

<sup>19</sup> Although these terms have a long history, stretching back to the Middle Ages, in contemporary society they persist because they are, as Serpell suggests 'more palatable than the reality' and as such they help distance the meat from the animal. Serpell 1986, p 196.

<sup>20</sup> M. Dekkers, *Dearest Pet: On Bestiality*, Verso, London, 2000, p 126.

This objectification of farm animals is also evident in their being the animals of choice for experiments with genetic engineering and cloning. Once again, the farm animal is seen to be a social construct and is thus a valid and acceptable research 'tool'. Tellingly, outside research for agricultural purposes or experiments for genetic engineering, the lives of farm animals are of little interest to most people, either as entertainment or in scholarly studies.<sup>21</sup> Thus there are no David Attenborough documentaries on 'The Lives of Farm Animals', although it could be argued that today the average urban dweller probably knows less about the lives of these animals than they do about the 'wild' animals that are so often the subject of these information TV programs.

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<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the exception here is the 'baby animal farms' which I have seen touring at suburban shopping centres and also the recent TV programs on veterinary practice, although the latter tend to concentrate on pets and exotic animals.

## PART TWO - THE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT: RELATED ARTIST AND WRITERS

### Looking at Animals: John Berger and Steve Baker

With my background in animal rights and an ongoing interest in human-animal relations, the context for the project is broad, encompassing readings in sociology, anthropology, moral philosophy, art history and art theory. A number of books have been important to the research, however the writings of John Berger and Steve Baker in particular provide a specific contextual background to the issues that concern both this research project and the work of the artists discussed below.

I came across John Berger's essay titled 'Why Look at Animals' in the mid 1980s and it was influential in confirming my interest in animals as subject matter for my artwork. First published in 1977 and subsequently included in his 1980 collection of essays, *About Looking*, this essay has become a seminal text for anyone interested in the matter of how humans 'look at' – i.e. think about - other animals. So important has this essay been, that it is rare for it *not* to be referred to in any art texts that are dealing with the representation of animals.<sup>22</sup>

Berger plots some of the major changes in the relationship between humans and other animals, with a particular focus on the time prior to the nineteenth century when animals were 'with man at the centre of his world',<sup>23</sup> until the era of 'twentieth century corporate capitalism, by which every tradition which has previously mediated between man and nature was broken.'<sup>24</sup> This extraordinary essay provides an erudite summary of the changing nature of the relationship between humans and animals, which has, since the industrial age, seen animals become further and further marginalised in contemporary western society.

Of particular relevance is Berger's discussion of the toy animal. Although Berger talks specifically about zoo animals, he draws attention to the ironic fact that as real animals became increasingly absent from the lives of children in the industrialised world they began to proliferate in the form of toys, picture books, cartoons and decorations. The sheer quantity of this sort of imagery in children's lives is

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<sup>22</sup> Substantial extracts from this essay have been included in a catalogue from a 1982 exhibition titled "Zoos" at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, and more recently in a monograph on Mark Dion published in 1997.

<sup>23</sup> J. Berger, 'Why Look at Animals?', *Selected Essays*, Bloomsbury, London, 2001, p 259.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid* p 259.

astonishing and yet in the average urban household these toys and pictures are increasingly replacing any contact with real, live animals other than dogs or cats<sup>25</sup>.

One of the main subtexts of Berger's essay is the loss of an authentic relationship with animals. Steve Baker notes that *Why Look at Animals* was originally published as three distinct pieces, with one of these pieces given the heading of 'Vanishing Animals'.<sup>26</sup> In what I have taken to be the section of the paper that would have originally been given this heading<sup>27</sup>, Berger speaks of how Descartes was responsible for initiating a theoretical break between humans and other animals, which was later emphasised in the classificatory system developed by Linnaeus. Berger writes of how modern agriculture has embraced Descartes' notion of the animal as a machine by reducing animals to nothing more than raw material. The result of this reduction is the marginalisation of animals, which has led to the disappearance of what Berger considers meaningful or authentic contact between 'us' and 'them'. Berger makes note of the fact that pets are present in our lives in vast numbers, but his 'implication that the urban pet is somehow less worthy than the wild animal or field animal'<sup>28</sup> is symptomatic of the nature-culture split that places wild animals in the category of 'nature' but domestic animals in the apparently lesser category of 'culture'.

In his 1993 book *Picturing the Beast* Steve Baker interrogates the connection between images of animals in popular culture and how these images affect and reflect the way we think about and treat animals. He discusses the positive and negative usage of animal imagery in cartoons, sport, politics and war-time propaganda, analysing the connection between how the animal is represented and how it is perceived. In a chapter titled 'Strategic Images for Animal Rights' he even suggests that his findings might assist animal rights campaigners when developing strategies to further their cause.

In 2000 Baker published a second book on this subject. However, this book was specifically concerned with the way that contemporary art and philosophy have represented the animal. *The Postmodern Animal* acknowledged the fact that artists are the great mediators of culture and as such they reflect, question and eventually even alter the way that societies think about themselves and the world they inhabit. Thus the cultural representation of animals as mediated through artists is a good indicator of the way that a society is thinking about these animals. *The Postmodern*

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p 270 & 272.

<sup>26</sup> Baker 1993, p 11.

<sup>27</sup> At around page 264 of Berger in *Selected Essays* 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Baker 1993, p 14.

*Animal* brings together the work of writers such as Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari and artists Ollie and Suzie, Sue Coe, Damien Hirst and Mark Dion amongst others, in order to explore the way that animals are thought about in a time when the boundaries between humans and other animals are being renegotiated.

Baker's analysis of the animal image, and its connection to how we think about and treat animals, has been influential in the development of the work through this research project. The publishing of books such as *Picturing the Beast* and *The Postmodern Animal* demonstrates a new scholarly interest in the issue of the representation of animals that is reflected in a resurgence of interest by artists in animals as subject matter.

### **Modern Human-Animal Relations Through the Eyes of Artists**

Any understanding of the animal, and of what the animal means to us, will be informed by and inseparable from our knowledge of its cultural representation. Culture shapes our reading of animals just as much as animals shape our reading of culture.<sup>29</sup>

The artists selected for discussion here have been chosen for the significance of domestic animals within their work, either because these animals are a primary or substantial source of subject matter and/or because they have made artworks dealing directly with the relationship between humans and farm animals.<sup>30</sup> The majority of these artists are also significant for the attention paid in their work to the animal itself, rather than the animal functioning in a totemic or symbolic manner. I have chosen to highlight particular artists from a specific era either because they are considered the prime exponents of the genre, and/or because they have been of particular importance to this project.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p 4.

<sup>30</sup> While Eugene Delacroix had a strong interest in animals and the relationship of 'man and nature' (especially in later years) his focus on 'wild' animals has caused me to omit him from this discussion. I have also chosen to omit a number of contemporary artists, who have animals as a primary focus in their work, such as Mark Dion, Suzie and Ollie, William Wegman, Susan Rothenburg and Australian artists such as Stephen Holland, John Kelly and Lynne Roberts-Goodwin. This is in part due to space restrictions, but primarily I have chosen contemporary artists whose work has farm animals as the focus. While John Kelly might be included here, his work is not driven by the sorts of social or political issues that concern this project. This point is validated by a statement made by Kelly on page 55 of *Artlink* Vol 22 No.1, 2002 where he is quoted as saying that 'For me it is irrelevant whether I am painting cows, cubes or whatever. It is simply a matter of allowing ideas to evolve on a fluent and continual basis'.

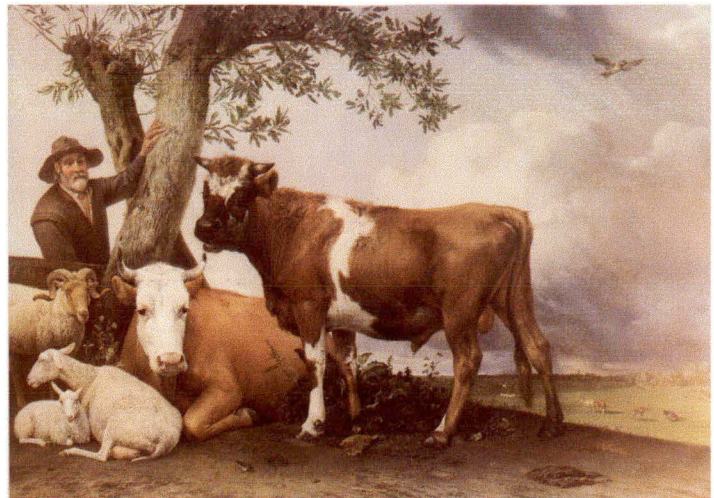
<sup>31</sup> The object and photograph within the artwork that has resulted from the research is clearly of importance. However as noted in part one of the exegesis, the primary context for the research is the subject of the representation of animals in art and popular culture. Thus, while a number of artists such as Ricky Swallow and David Levinthal are of interest for their use of

Through analysis of the treatment of domestic animals in art since the mid-seventeenth century until the present day some of the central issues of this research will be elucidated and the final body of work will be given an historical and conceptual context.

Paulus Potter – a seventeenth century Dutch animal painter.

In the mid seventeenth century Dutch and Flemish painters were the foremost exponents of the animal subject,<sup>32</sup> due perhaps to the fact that the Netherlands at around this time had the highest number of domestic animals per cultivated acre and per person of any country.<sup>33</sup> The relationship between humans and the animals they farmed was much closer than in more recent times; far fewer people lived in cities and the housing and slaughtering of animals and packaging of meat was a more familiar, less sanitised affair. It was still relatively common for people and their animals to live under one roof. As Keith Thomas points out:

Dwelling in such close proximity to men [sic], these animals were often thought of as individuals, particularly since, by modern standards, herds were usually small. Shepherds knew the faces of their sheep as well as those of their neighbours, and some farmers could trace stolen cattle by distinguishing their hoof prints.<sup>34</sup>



2. Paulus Potter,  
*The Young Bull*,  
1647.

This familiarity is reflected in the paintings of the most famous of the Dutch animal painters, Paulus Potter (1625 – 54). Potter's animals convey individualism and

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objects (and, in Levinthal's case photography) in their work, they are not aligned with the primary context for the research.

<sup>32</sup>The tradition of animal painting in Western art, where the emphasis is on observation from nature, only comes to the fore in the seventeenth century. Prior to this the animal's primary role in art was symbolic, illustrating Judeo-Christian stories and beliefs such as 'The Good Shepherd' or 'Daniel in the Lion's Den'.

<sup>33</sup> K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, Penguin, London, 1984, p 26.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p 95.



character as seen in his most famous painting, *The Young Bull*, in which the various life-size sheep and cattle have as much presence and personality as – if not more than – the farmer. Kenneth Clark notes that:

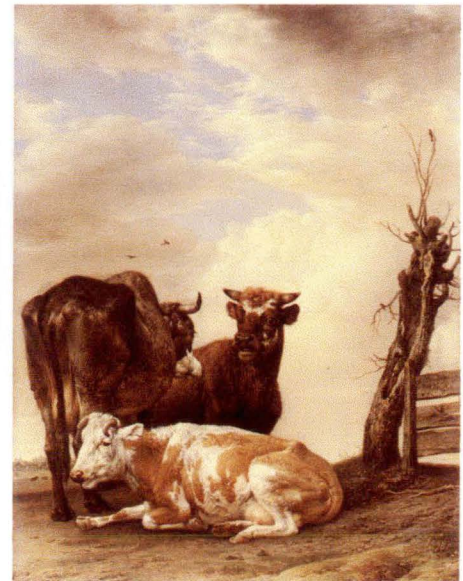
[*The Young Bull*] is evidently the product of a young man's intensity of gaze. When he comes to the human figure on the left this intensity vanishes.<sup>35</sup>

Potter's animals have been observed and rendered with such specific detail that their precise breeds can be determined. Beyond his obsessive detail, however, his works are painted with great warmth and compassion, suggesting that he felt an empathy with the animals he painted.<sup>36</sup> In a number works, at least one of the animals faces out from the painting, looking directly at the viewer, often with a somewhat anthropomorphic expression. Thus the animals in Potter's paintings read as portraits of specific individuals as much as studies of particular types or breeds.



3. Above: Paulus Potter, *Two Pigs in a Sty*, 1649.

4. Right: Paulus Potter, *Two Cows and a Bull*, 1647.



In the seventeenth century the western world's relationship to animals and the natural world was in a state of flux – the Middle Ages had to a great degree been left behind, but the period of the Enlightenment was still to come. A scientific fascination with the natural world was beginning however, during the early modern period, animals were on the whole viewed negatively; 'helping to define, by contrast, what was supposedly distinctive and admirable about the human species'.<sup>37</sup> It is unsurprising

<sup>35</sup> Clark, 1977, p 30.

<sup>36</sup> Further evidence of this empathy is to be found in a work titled *The Life of the Hunter* where Potter questions the way that animals are treated at the hand of humans. In this multi-panelled work, Potter depicts a number of hunting scenes, but the most remarkable are the two larger central panels depicting animals taking revenge on the hunters and their dogs. In one panel the hunters are being tried by an animal court, and in the other they are hung and cooked.

<sup>37</sup> Clark 1977, p 40.



that animals were thought of as unworthy subject matter for a serious artist. In a review of an exhibition of Potter's work at *The Hague* in 1995, Christopher Brown wrote:

It is, after all, remarkable that this immensely gifted artist from an educated and cultivated background, whose father was a history painter, should have abandoned history painting in favour of the – at least according to theorists – humble genre of animal painting.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the criticism of his choice of subject matter, Potter did not waver from his decision to abandon history painting in favour of painting animals. During his short career (he died at the age of 28) he produced a number of extraordinary paintings that have been extremely influential on other artists during his lifetime and in the following centuries.<sup>39</sup>

#### The art of George Stubbs in eighteenth century Britain.

By the early eighteenth century, animal painting was enjoying huge popularity in Britain. The attitude toward animals had changed markedly from that of the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. Technological developments in agriculture resulted in far fewer people being needed to produce food and this led to a rapid rise in the number of people moving into cities and towns. Ironically, as people moved away from the countryside, the objective study of the natural world became increasingly popular and the importance of rural life and land possession to the wealthy was being demonstrated by an increased interest in recreational hunting, horse racing and animal breeding. It was these wealthy landowners who were the animal painters' main clients. They were commissioned to paint hunting scenes, portraits of prize-winning racehorses and favourite hunting steeds and hounds.

George Stubbs (1724 – 1806) is widely considered the most important and talented animal painter of this period. The son of a currier, Stubbs grew up around tanneries and slaughterhouses, which may account for his enthusiastic interest in dissections and anatomical studies. While best known for his paintings of horses, he depicted a wide variety of both domestic and exotic animals in his highly detailed and beautifully executed style. Despite the enormous popularity of animal painting at this time, it was still not considered a worthy pursuit for a serious artist and Stubbs

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<sup>38</sup> Christopher Brown, 'The Hague: Paulus Potter', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol 37, 1995 p 267. Brown goes on to relate that Potter's father-in-law was apparently at first reluctant to allow his daughter to marry a painter of animals. This is despite the fact that Potter was acknowledged during his lifetime as a highly gifted painter.

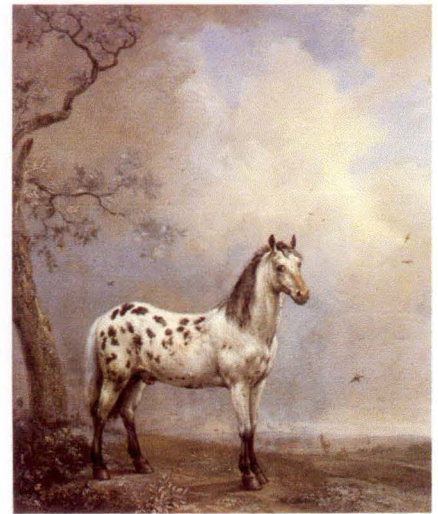
<sup>39</sup> I note that the cow image in the Mark Tansey painting in *The American Art* is based on Potter's *The Young Bull* (Phaidon, London 1999, p 442).

suffered the same sort of criticism as Potter regarding his choice of subject matter. Basil Taylor notes in his Stubbs monograph that:

Having been cast as an animal painter, and as a result of the plain, undemonstrative style that was natural to him, he could not hope to achieve the status which less gifted but more biddable artists were to enjoy.<sup>40</sup>



5. Left: George Stubbs, *Pumpkin with a Stable-lad*, 1774.



6. Right: Paulus Potter: *Leopard-spotted Stallion*, 1649.

Stubbs and Potter have much in common in that both produced animal portraits (as opposed to studies) that delight in capturing the individual characteristics of the animals they portray. But there is a central point of difference between the two painters that reflects the differing attitudes toward animals and nature that the two men experienced in their respective lifetimes. Where Potter's paintings exude warmth and compassion that verges on the sentimental, Stubbs' paintings demonstrate a more objective detachment from the animals depicted, a view that reflects his Cartesian fascination for the inner workings of animals. Stubbs' desire for empirical knowledge of animals is in keeping with the eighteenth century's fascination with, and scientific study into, the natural world; an interest encouraged by the exploration and colonisation of distant lands and the attendant collection of plants and animals from these newly discovered places. Taylor remarks:

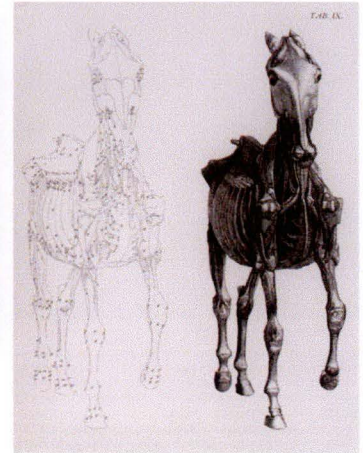
Stubbs interest in [exotic animals] reveals his communion with the intellectual curiosity of a period when study of the living world was a particularly active part of scientific research...<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup>B. Taylor, *Stubbs*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1971, p 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p 31.



7. Above: George Stubbs, *Zebra*, 1763.  
 8. Right: George Stubbs, *The Anatomy of the Horse*, pl. IX, 1766.



Stubbs painted a number of works in which the animal is depicted life-size, including *Whistlejacket* and his late masterpiece *Hambletonian, Rubbing Down*. The portrait of the prize-winning Arab stallion *Whistlejacket* is of special interest for the total absence of any background;<sup>42</sup> the horse is grounded only by an extremely minimal use of shadow extending back from his hind legs. Without the background as a distraction the viewer's attention rests solely on the beauty and perfection of the horse. It is an extraordinary experience to stand in front of this impressive painting where the life-size animal, painted with such attention to detail, is 'transformed into a monument without any function other than to be admired'.<sup>43</sup>



9. George Stubbs, *Whistlejacket*, 1762.

<sup>42</sup> Stubbs produced a number of horse paintings devoid of background around 1762.

<sup>43</sup> M. Myrone, *George Stubbs*, Tate, London, 2002, p 36.





10. George Stubbs, *Hambletonian, Rubbing Down*, 1799 – 1800.

By the end of the eighteenth century the relationship between humans and animals was becoming increasingly ambiguous. The urbanisation of Europe changed forever the way that western cultures thought about the world. Once distanced from the rural and wild country areas and living in cities, people were confronted by the differences and began to construct the dichotomy of the 'man-made world' and the 'natural world' with which we are so familiar today. This differentiation was made even more apparent by the exploration of exotic countries and the collection of plants and animals from these places. Stubbs *Horse Attacked by a Lion* series<sup>44</sup> can be read as a reaction to the troubled and changing relationship between humans and the natural world at a time, when the dual notions of nature (the lion) and culture (the horse) are in conflict.

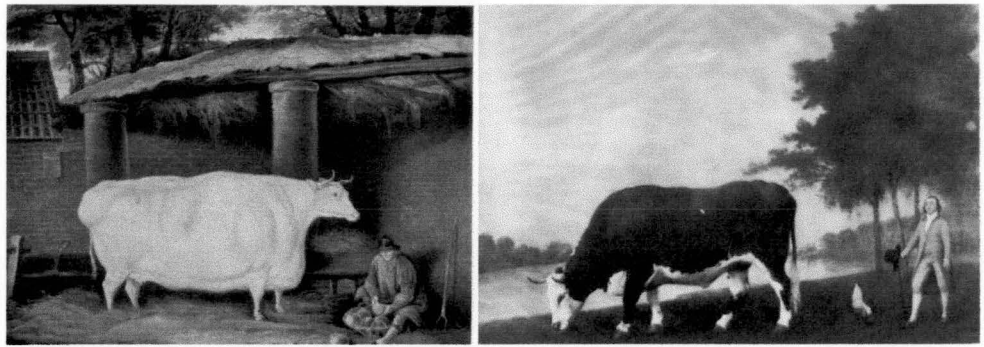


11. Left: George Stubbs, *Horse Devoured by a Lion*, c1763.

12. Right: George Stubbs, *Lion Attacking a Horse*, 1769.

<sup>44</sup> Stubbs produced some seventeen paintings on this subject over a thirty-year period from 1762.

Meanwhile the genetic manipulation of domestic animals by selective breeding had become a sophisticated and ruthless endeavour in Britain and a number were kept in steady employment painting portraits of prized animals. These paintings acted as a form of advertisement for the quality of the breeder's stock, which as Basil Taylor notes, contributed to the regular exaggeration of the animals' preferred features<sup>45</sup>. Thus we see pigs and cattle depicted with hugely fat bodies and tiny legs and heads.



13. Left: Engraving after Thomas Weaver, *A White Short Horned Heifer*, 1811.  
14. Right George Stubbs, *The Lincolnshire Ox*, 1790.

Stubbs was far more interested in the accurate observation and portrayal of horses, dogs and exotic animals than the embellished portraits of prized breeding stock produced by lesser artists. However, much of Stubbs' work was designed to show off the best aspects of the individual animal as an example of its type and as such the animal is usually shown side on so the viewer is able to observe and judge the animal's conformation. Unlike the animals in Potter's work, which are seen from a variety of angles including facing the viewer and are even depicted defecating, urinating and mating, Stubbs' animals are objectified and depicted in such a way as to privilege the viewer.

#### Edwin Landseer, Rosa Bonheur and the ambiguous human-animal relations of nineteenth century Britain and France.

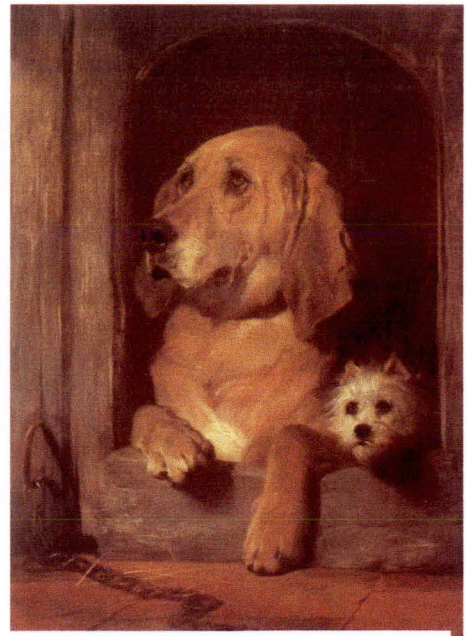
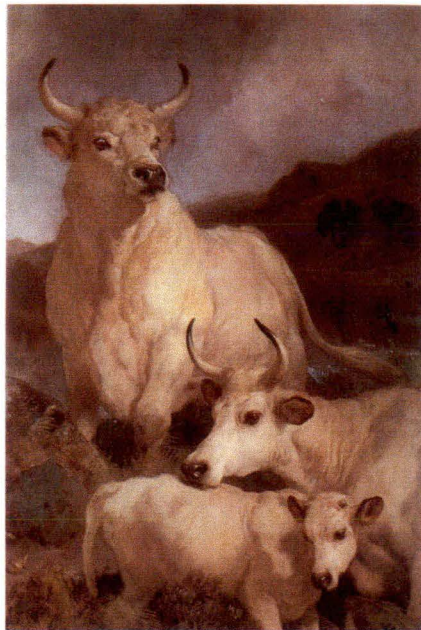
The nineteenth century brought a general rethinking of the relationship between humans and the natural world. The intellectuals of the day questioned the anthropocentric view of the world that had dominated western cultures for so long and the urban middle classes formed a romantic view of animals and nature that was, ironically, only made possible by their distance from it. By 1824 the (Royal) *Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* (RSPCA) had been formed in Britain and, in 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. However, human-animal relations remained ambivalent, with 'sports' such as bull-baiting eventually outlawed in Britain while fox and stag hunting remained

<sup>45</sup> B. Taylor, *Animal Painting in England*, Penguin, Hammondsworth, 1955, pp 40-41.



popular and socially acceptable.<sup>46</sup> There was a clear recognition of the fact that animals were able to suffer pain and, as such, people had a moral duty to treat them with compassion. Meanwhile, the scientific establishment enthusiastically vivisected large numbers of living animals as part of their studies.

English animal painter Edwin Landseer (1802 – 73) is thus very much an artist of his time<sup>47</sup>. His overtly romantic and sentimental depictions of animals recognised their innocence and also their similarity to humans, attributes he emphasised by giving his works titles such as *Dignity and Impudence*. However, he also hunted for sport and painted a number of violent hunting scenes.<sup>48</sup> Landseer's work might be seen as the antithesis of Stubbs' more detached and objective style. In comparison to Stubbs, who as noted, usually presented his animals side on, Landseer's romanticised, anthropomorphic paintings often presented the animal facing the viewer in a manner not dissimilar to aspects of Potter's paintings from the seventeenth century.



15. Left: Sir Edwin Landseer, *Wild Cattle of Chillingham*, 1867

16. Right: Sir Edwin Landseer, *Dignity and Impudence*, 1839.

Although Landseer's paintings tended to focus primarily on dogs and wild animals his works are of interest in illustrating the extraordinary change in attitudes toward animals and animal painting that had taken place within fifty years of Stubbs' death.

<sup>46</sup> K. Tester, *Animals and Society*, Routledge, London, 1991. In chapter 5 Tester outlines how the banning of certain blood sports but not others in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain was based on the hierarchy of the British class system.

<sup>47</sup> In *Animals and Men* Clark quotes Landseer when referring to the latter's enjoyment of deer hunting that, 'in truth I ought to be ashamed of the assassination'. K. Clark 1977, p 102.

<sup>48</sup> A number of critics and historians have noted an undercurrent of violence and cruelty in Landseer's work. For example see L. & P. Murray, *Penguin Dictionary of Art and Artists*, Hammondsworth, 1983 p 223 and, G. P. Weisberg, 'Sir Edwin Landseer', *Art News*, Vol 81, No 3, March 1982, p 122.

Indeed, where Stubbs had had a difficult relationship with the Royal Academy, based to a great degree on the lack of critical acceptance of his animal paintings, Landseer was not only a hugely popular painter with the public, he was also accepted into the Academy at a young age and was once offered the presidency. Landseer was Queen Victoria's favourite painter and was awarded a gold medal at the Paris Fair of 1855 together with the painters Ingres and Delacroix. He also enjoyed favour with the influential 19<sup>th</sup> century art critic, John Ruskin, who hailed him as 'much more a natural historian than a painter'<sup>49</sup> and called *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner* 'one of the most perfect...pictures...which modern times has seen'.<sup>50</sup>



17. Sir Edwin Landseer,  
*The Old Shepherd's  
Chief Mourner*, 1837

Landseer's decision to make dogs one of the major subjects of his work, reflects the popularity of pet-keeping amongst urban society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a popularity that grew in direct proportion to the industrialisation of western societies. This need to have pets had a significant effect on the way that people thought about animals in general. Keith Tester notes that 'pet-keeping was most prevalent amongst the urban middle-class – that is precisely the class that had the least strong direct relationship with animals'<sup>51</sup> and it is no coincidence that the demands for animals to be treated more humanely came from this class also. As suggested by James Serpell and Elizabeth Paul, pets provide an ethical bridge, allowing humans to empathise with other less familiar animals.<sup>52</sup>

Later in his career Landseer suffered from alcoholism, severe depression and loneliness and these clearly affected his previously optimistic view of the natural

<sup>49</sup> Clark 1977 pp 102 & 193. Stubbs is significant in his absence from any of Ruskin's writings.

<sup>50</sup> J. Slegman, *Victorian Taste: A Study of Arts and Architecture 1830 - 1890*, M.I.T., Cambridge, 1971, p 45.

<sup>51</sup> Tester 1991, p 53.

<sup>52</sup> J. Serpell & E. Paul, 'Pets and Positive Attitudes to Animals', *Animals and Human Society*, A. Manning & J. Serpell (eds), Routledge, London 1994.

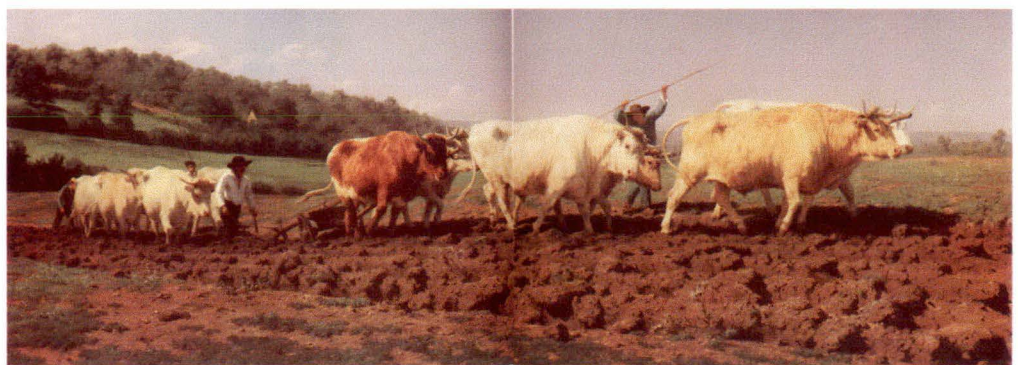


world. During this time he produced a number of allegorical paintings of wild animals and natural disasters that depict a less utopian, more violent view of nature. When viewed together, the earlier and later works reflect how 'the ambivalence we feel about civilisation is expressed in the differences in our attitudes to wild and domestic animals'.<sup>53</sup>



18. Sir Edwin Landseer, *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, 1862 - 64

Born just twenty years later than Landseer, the French painter Rosa Bonheur (1822 – 99) is considered the most gifted of a number of French *animaliers* of the period<sup>54</sup>. A great admirer of Dutch animal painters such as Paulus Potter, she was also heavily influenced by Landseer<sup>55</sup> and owned a copy of Stubbs' *Anatomy of the Horse*. Apart from a number of smaller works reminiscent of Landseer, Bonheur concentrated her efforts on grand, dramatic paintings that celebrated the power and strength of domestic animals such as horses and oxen although later works also depicted wild animals in naturalistic settings.



19. Rosa Bonheur, *Ploughing in the Nivernais*, 1849.

<sup>53</sup> M. Midgely, 'Bridge Building at Last', Manning & Serpell (eds), 1994, p 192.

<sup>54</sup> The other leading exponent of this genre was Constant Troyon. While Troyon and Bonheur are both important figures in the history of animal painting, Bonheur is of special significance to this project for her obsessive personal fascination with animals. It is also true that there is substantially more written about Bonheur, which is no doubt due, at least in part, to her unusual lifestyle and eccentricities.

<sup>55</sup> Landseer in turn was a huge admirer of Bonheur, whom he found so charming that he reportedly offered jokingly to become 'Sir Edwin Bonheur'. D. Ashton & D. Browne-Hare, *Rosa Bonheur: A Life and a Legend*, Viking, New York, 1981, p 106.



Bonheur led a highly unorthodox life. She refused to conform to what was expected of a nineteenth century woman and tended to dress in men's clothing. Although at the time it was illegal in France for women to wear trousers Bonheur, managed to procure special permission from the authorities to dress as a man, which made it possible for her to do drawings at horse fairs, saleyards and slaughterhouses without being overly harassed by the workers.

Bonheur's fascination with animals began at a very young age, and she kept all kinds of animals including sheep and goats in the family home. By the time she was an adult her extensive menagerie included dogs, horses, mules, sheep, goats, cattle, deer and, later, even lions. She would order animal 'models' to be delivered; which, depending on whether they could be sufficiently tamed, were kept as pets.<sup>56</sup> She was clearly passionate about animals but her passion was as much the fascination of a biologist as that of an animal lover. Although she was member of the French SPCA and totally rejected the Cartesian notion of the animal as mere machine declaring often her preference for 'dumb' animals over people, she also had a passion for hunting both small and large animals. She formed close and sentimental attachments to some of the animals in her menagerie and worried that 'while caring for my animals so passionately, do I not displease them supremely since I deprive them of their liberty?'.<sup>57</sup> But she didn't hesitate to dispense with others that were too difficult to manage. This ambivalence, as with Landseer, is a reflection of the complex relationship between humans and animals in nineteenth century urban societies.



20. Rosa Bonheur, *The Horse Fair*, 1853 – 55.

<sup>56</sup> Ruskin remarked when comparing Landseer and Bonheur that 'Landseer studied and loved dogs, but Rosa Bonheur's feelings for animals, were, I think more akin to the menagerie keeper's love'. A Boime, 'The Case of Rosa Bonheur; Why Should a Woman Want to be More Like a Man?', *Art History*, vol 4, December, 1981, p 393.

<sup>57</sup> Ashton & Browne-Hare 1981, p 117.

Through her work, Bonheur appears more interested in portraying the physical essence of the animal rather than specific or individual traits. Her energetic and animated paintings of horses and oxen are dramatically different from Stubbs' classical studies of horses and dogs. However it could be argued that her work is even more detached than his, as apart from a few portraits of favoured pets, the majority of her work depicts animals in their more generic form rather than as individuals. Hence whilst her most famous painting *The Horse Fair* conveys the magnificent power and energy of Percheron horses the viewer does not empathise with any particular animal.

#### Franz Marc – a modernist animal painter

The German Expressionist painter Franz Marc (1880-1916) is an exception within this section of the exegesis. The animals in his paintings are not primarily drawn from life but are rather more stylised beasts, painted with strong symbolic colour with the aim of capturing an animal essence. He is also an exception within modernism as one of the very few artists of this period to take animals as primary subject matter for his work. The animals in Marc's paintings are represented in an ideal world, in complete organic harmony with their environment, unmolested and uncontrolled by people.



21. Franz Marc, *The Large Blue Horses*, 1911.

Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was one of the most industrialised and urbanised countries in Europe and the German Expressionist movement was a direct response to the politically and socially turbulent society in which it evolved. The exponential growth of cities and the consequent detachment from nature that was felt by so many people caused an intense longing for a return to an idealised time when humans had a more earthy, honest relationship with each

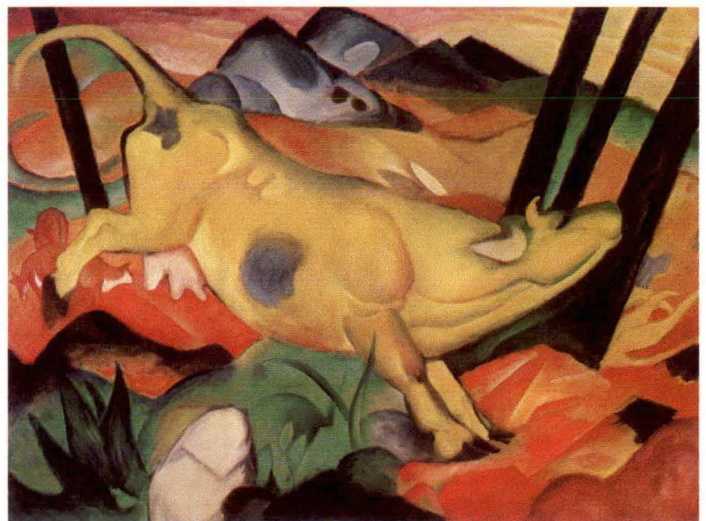


world. The persistent Cartesian view that nature could only be understood via rational empirical study was rejected by expressionist painters like Marc, who sought solace in a more spiritual understanding of the world.

Marc's first works were in the German Romantic landscape tradition, but five years later he began to show an interest in animals, making some sketches of sheep while summering in the Bavarian Alps. At around the same time he met the French animal painter, Jean Bloè Niestlé, who would remain a lifelong friend and with whom he shared a passion for the representation of animals. However a trip to Paris in 1907, where he saw the work of Van Gogh and Gauguin, started him on the path to expressionism. He wrote that his 'wavering, anxiety-ridden spirit found peace at last in these marvellous paintings'.<sup>58</sup> In the same year he began daily visits to the Berlin zoo to sketch the animals and, of his increasing interest in nature, he wrote:

I am attempting to enhance my sensibility for the organic rhythm I feel is in all things; and I am trying to feel pantheistically the rapture of the flow of 'blood' in nature, in the trees, in the animals, in the air. ...I can see no more successful means toward an "animalisation" of art, as I like to call it, than the painting of animals. That is why I have taken it up.<sup>59</sup>

Over the next few years Marc produced paintings that, with their strong, symbolic colour and careful compositions, aimed to achieve a rhythmic balance and harmony in line with his belief in a unity of nature.



22. Franz Marc, *The Yellow Cow*, 1911

<sup>58</sup> F.S. Levine, *The Apocalyptic Vision: The Art of Franz Marc as German Expressionism*, Harper and Row, New York, 1979, p 42.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid* p 44

The horse<sup>60</sup> became the animal of most importance to Marc but was by no means the only animal he portrayed. One of his most popular and extraordinary paintings is *The Yellow Cow*, which is an image of exuberant joy. This is no prize-winning overweight beast or working animal enslaved and under human control, but is an image of transcendent freedom. Sadly, Marc's utopian vision of the world was not to last. By 1911 an air of discord and aggression began to appear in his work, reflecting the imminent onset of war after 40 years of peace. Marc's work became more and more fractured and apocalyptic. In 1914, at the outbreak of war, Marc volunteered for service and in a letter home in 1915, he wrote:

Very early in life I found man to be "ugly"; the animals appeared more beautiful, more pure. But then I discovered in them too, so much that was repulsive and ugly...until now, when suddenly I have become fully conscious of the ugliness of nature, its *impurity*. Perhaps it is our European view of the world that has so poisoned and distorted it. It is, indeed, for that reason that I dream of a new Europe.<sup>61</sup>



23. Franz Marc, *Animal Destinies (The Trees Show Their Rings, the Animals Their Veins)*, 1913.

<sup>60</sup> In considering the reasons behind Marc's choice of the horse as his primary source of imagery, Levine quotes Karl Jung stating that 'the horse [is] the creature which, more than any other, exists as a symbol of the animal component in man.' (Levine 1979, p 55). However, I would suggest that horses are of importance both in Marc's and Bonheur's work for their dual roles as companions and servants. They are born wild but must be tamed to serve humans; they are immensely powerful, but this power must be controlled. Unlike other domestic animals bred for specific traits to make them more useful to humans, horses are still seen primarily as 'natural' and as such contain in one beast elements of both 'nature' and 'culture'.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid p 102.



On March 4, 1916 at the age of 26 Marc was killed while on duty. His last paintings were images of a world in crisis and the artist, who had once wondered at how animals see the world and whether it were possible to paint an animal's experience, had all but abandoned his earlier paintings of a utopian natural harmony. He had confronted in the most extreme way the contradictions of human existence and human-animal relationships – we are both part of nature and divorced from it. We are animals and as such are like all other animals, yet it is those other animals that define us as human. These fundamental contradictions continue to trouble western societies and their artists today.

Friend or Food? Animals in the art of Sue Coe, Ivan Durrant, Herman Nitsch and Damien Hirst

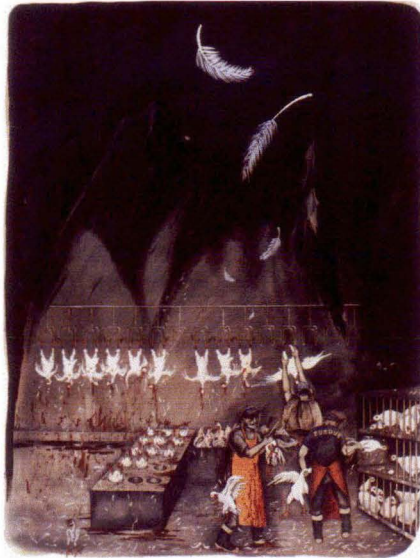
In discussing Landseer's rapid descent into obscurity after his death, Gabriel P. Weisberg notes that 'The developing Modern movement, with its emphasis on formal simplifications and abstraction, had little interest in an artist who focused on sentiment and narrative'.<sup>62</sup> As noted in part one of this paper, from the Modernist period until just a few decades ago, animals became all but absent in art. Marc is one of the very few exceptions to this rule. While a number of Modernists continued to paint the landscape, very few extended this interest in the natural world to animals. As Marc noted in his 1911 essay titled *How Does a Horse See the World?* '[It is] typical of our best painters that they avoid living subject matter.'<sup>63</sup> This avoidance continued well into the twentieth century.

The return of the animal in art coincided more or less with the publishing in 1975 of *Animal Liberation*. Written by Australian philosopher Peter Singer, the book had enormous international influence on the way humans thought about and treated animals. Singer questioned the ethics of the way that humans treated animals and reasoned that as animals suffer pain in much the same way that humans do, they should be accorded the same sort of consideration for their emotional and physical wellbeing as humans. *Animal Liberation* was published at a time when western societies were re-evaluating the kind of established cultural hierarchies that placed women's interests below those of men and coloured races below whites. Singer argued that the status of animals deserved to be reconsidered in the same light. It is in this social climate that the work of artists Sue Coe and Ivan Durrant evolved.

<sup>62</sup> Weisberg, *Art News*, vol 81, No 3, 1982 p 122.

<sup>63</sup> Baker 2000, p 21. NB: This 2<sup>nd</sup> edition has different pagination to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition.

Sue Coe has devoted her artistic career to depicting the wrongs in a variety of political and social issues such as poverty, racism, violence against women and animal cruelty. Her art is driven by her strong commitment to these causes, and the illustrative approach she uses is chosen for its ability to communicate her concerns to as wide an audience as possible. Although she exhibits regularly in galleries and is included in such collections as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, she also produces books that aim to take her message outside the art world. Coe maintains her commitment to causes by 'a vigilant observation of the realities that most [people] try to ignore.'<sup>64</sup> Not only does Coe refuse to avoid such realities, she goes looking for the truth. It is this need to know what goes on behind the scenes - so that she can reveal it to the public - that drives her work concerning the horrors of the meat, egg and dairy industries.



24. Left: Sue Coe, *Up to Six Minutes to Die*.  
 25. Above: Sue Coe, page from sketchbook.  
 Both images from *Dead Meat*, 1996.

Raised in a working-class English town during the 1950s, Coe's childhood home was adjacent to a pig farm and slaughterhouse, 'a cruel looking building with no windows, run by a cruel man'.<sup>65</sup> Although her early life was filled with the sights, smells and sounds of the violence and misery of this place, as a youngster the animals' suffering, which she would later depict so graphically, did not consciously move her.

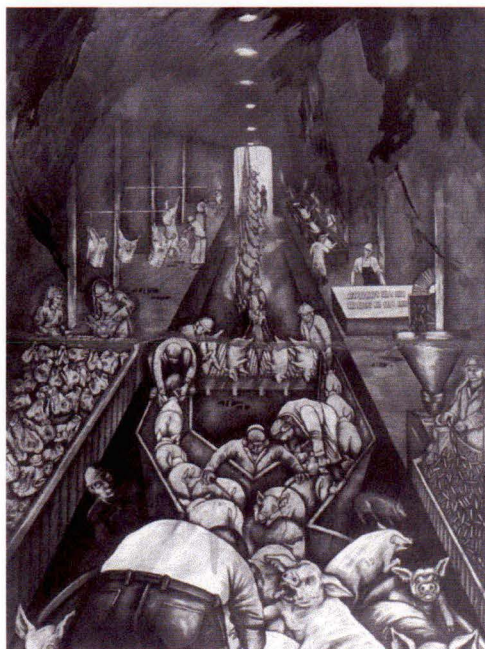
Coe's imagery is drawn directly from her visits to slaughterhouses and meat-packing plants where she speaks with the people who work there while witnessing all the horrors that the average person wants to avoid. She keeps diaries and sketchbooks detailing her experiences and where possible draws and photographs what she sees.

<sup>64</sup> Susan Gill, 'Sue Coe's Inferno', *Artnews*, vol 86, no. 8, October 1987, p 113.

<sup>65</sup> Sue Coe, *Dead Meat*, Four Walls Eight Windows, New York, 1996 p 37.



Her 1996 book *Dead Meat* documents 26 different saleyards, feedlots, dairies, hatcheries and slaughterhouses, depicting in graphic detail the horrors of these places that are removed from public view.<sup>66</sup>



26. Sue Coe, *Cold Cuts*.



27. Sue Coe, *Wall Street*

Both images from *Dead Meat*, 1996.

While Coe has received a certain amount of critical and popular acclaim, her art has been described as ‘somewhat facile and overly literal’.<sup>67</sup> Importantly, as literal as her work is, it is also not sanitised for our consumption. Considering the horrific nature of the things she has witnessed, it is hard to imagine what other approach would be more valid. As Baker states:

No rethinking of human or animal identity is likely to emerge, it is clear, if art and philosophy choose to present the animal primarily as matter for human ‘solace and pleasure’.<sup>68</sup>

At around the same time that Coe was beginning to focus her attention on animals as the subject of her art, Ivan Durrant was investigating similar issues in Australia but in an even more confrontational and controversial manner.

<sup>66</sup> Although her work aims to illustrate the suffering of the animals, she is not without empathy for the workers in these places who themselves suffer low wages and unpleasant and physically hard work under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions. At times it is clear she sees the workers (as much as the animals) as victims of the system she is criticising.

<sup>67</sup> B. Adams, ‘The Coldest Cut: Sue Coe’s Porkopolis’, *Art in America*, vol 78, no. 1, January 1990, p 127

<sup>68</sup> Baker 2000, p 19



28. Ivan Durrant, *Beverley, the Amazing Performing Cow*, 1975.

In their simple naïve style, Durrant's late 1960s paintings of cows and other domestic animals reflected the fact that he had no formal art training. These nostalgic paintings attempt to 'recapture images of his past, when he was billeted out from the Melbourne orphanage to country families'.<sup>69</sup> By the mid 1970s, photographs had become his primary source material revealing an ongoing interest in the way that society is affected by images. He became a proficient photorealist, producing a series of paintings about racehorses and the racing industry, inspired by his purchase of a racehorse that he trained himself. In 1975 Durrant became interested in the possibility of making work that dealt with his experiences of working in a slaughterhouse in the early 1960s. He devised an 'art happening' where a cow, named Beverley, would be killed on stage. As Robert Lindsay states:

The performance was not intended to be a vegetarian, anti-meat consumption statement, but rather an assault on false standards or hypocrisy. We eat meat but will not easily accept that an animal must die to provide it, just as we accept many other benefits in society without accepting responsibility for their creation.<sup>70</sup>

Unable to carry out the event as planned he later shot Beverley in front of a television film crew and dumped her body on the forecourt of the National Gallery of Victoria.

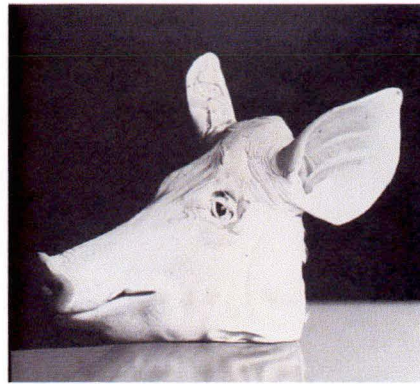


29. Ivan Durrant, *Chopping Block*, 1976.

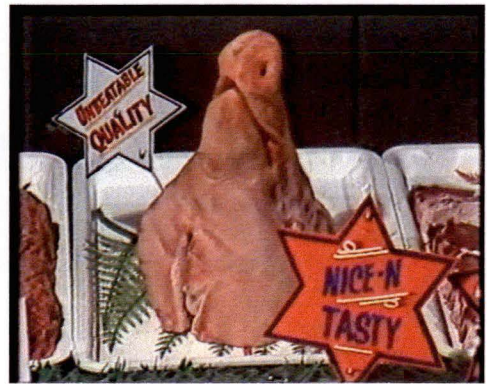
<sup>69</sup> Robert Lindsay, *Survey 8 – Ivan Durrant*, National Gallery of Victoria, exhibition catalogue, 1979, p1



Durrant has conducted other events highlighting the detachment between urban people and the animals they eat, including *Chopping Block* (1976) and *Edible Art* (1978). In *Chopping Block* guests at a dinner party were presented as their dinner with a live pigeon which they had to kill themselves if they wanted to eat it. In *Edible Art* a number of cattle owned by Durrant with the words 'edible art' painted on their sides were auctioned at a saleyard. Durrant has also made a number of paintings based on photographs of meat; a series of work based on pigs' heads (both 3D casts and paintings); and he produced a highly realistic 3D diorama of a butcher shop window.



30. Ivan Durrant, *Big Pig's Head*, 1976



31. Ivan Durrant, *The Butcher Shop* (detail) 1977- 78.

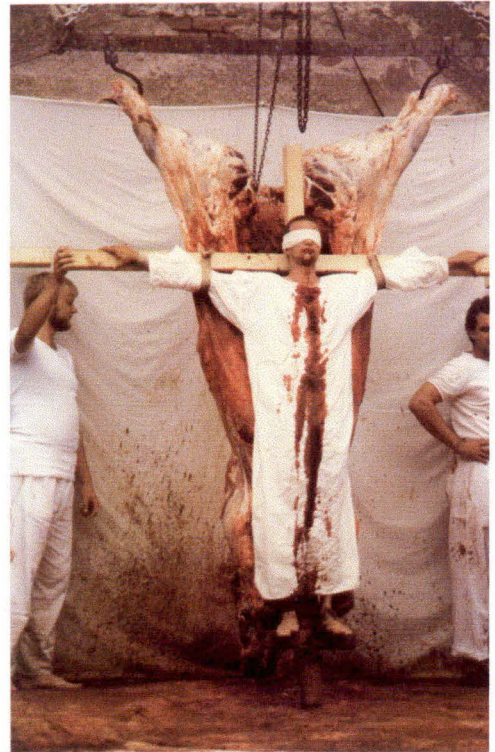
The death of animals in the name of art is central to the work of Austrian artist Herman Nitsch. Since the 1960s Nitsch has held over 80 controversial 'actions' which are presented as a kind of primitive, sacrificial rite, aligning humans with their base instinctual selves. Generally running over several days, these 'actions' result in the slaughtering and butchering of a number of animals such as cattle, pigs and sheep. Before the animals are eaten, the participants of the 'action' plunge their hands into the still warm innards of the carcasses, smearing themselves and the audience with the blood and visceral remains of the slaughtered animal. In a statement about these 'actions' Nitsch refers to an 'aesthetic of the cruel'<sup>71</sup> and refers to 'evaluation elemental sensuous aggressive-sadistic perceptions, dilacerating of raw meat, disembowelment of slaughtered animal cadavers and trampling on the entrails.'<sup>72</sup> Midas Dekkers notes that 'Animal abuse, as RSPCA inspectors know, is often linked with sexual arousal'. He quotes the case of a 42-year-old man who recalled his boyhood enjoyment at watching domestic animals being slaughtered and the strong sexual feelings this evoked, resulting in ejaculation. He later took to visiting slaughterhouses to watch the 'spurting blood and the death throes of the

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>71</sup> Cerrito, J (ed), *Contemporary Artists*, 4th Edition, St James Press, Detroit, 1996, p 847.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid p 847.

animals, which always gave him a mounting feeling of sexual pleasure'.<sup>73</sup> Nitsch's 'art' actions are not dissimilar in their motivation from the aberrant sexual enjoyment of death demonstrated by this non-artist.



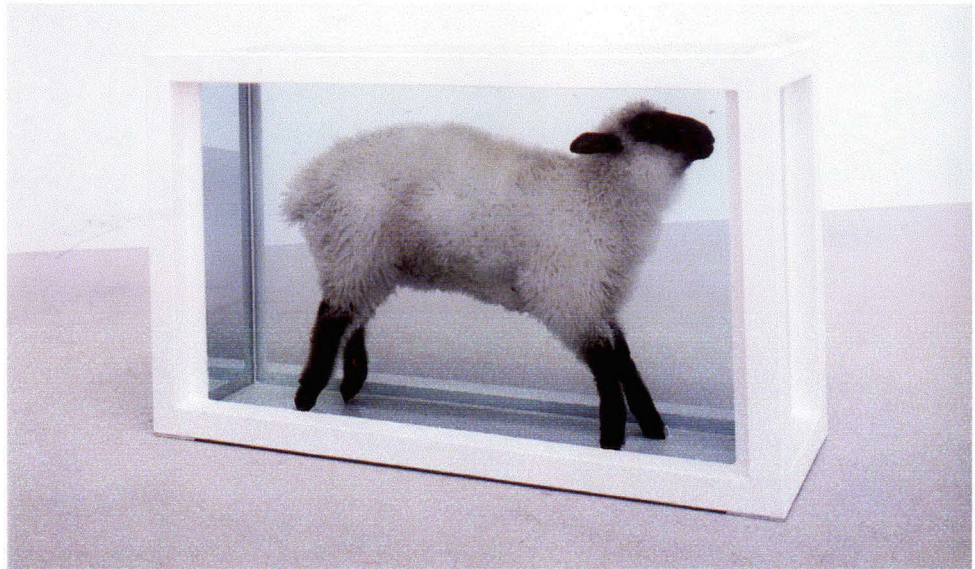
32. Herman Nitsch, From 80<sup>th</sup> Action, 1984.

While the death of animals and the resulting controversy in Nitsch's 'actions' might bring to mind the 'happenings' of Durrant, the connection is a relatively superficial one. In Durrant's work the animal is of fundamental significance – he wants to confront us with the animal's death and, in doing so, asks us to consider the fact that we are implicated in the death of animals for food every day. In works such as *Chopping Block* and *Beverley, the Amazing Performing Cow* our relationship to the animal is personalised, and we are forced to confront the death of the animal as an individual living being. The animals in Nitsch's work, however, are objectified; they are little more than a convenient tool to achieve a heightened, ritualised drama in his gratuitously violent 'actions'. His choice of 'food' animals such as cattle, pigs and sheep reflects a cultural attitude toward these animals where they are seen as commodities whose ultimate purpose is to be slaughtered. In this sense, Nitsch has more in common with the butchered and preserved animal works of notorious young British artist Damien Hirst. However, while both Hirst and Nitsch employ the animal in their work as a commodity, where Nitsch revels in the slaughtering of the animal, Hirst distances himself from the butchered animals he presents. Although he confesses to admiration for the carcass paintings of Soutine, Rembrandt and Bacon,

<sup>73</sup> Dekkers 2000, p 146.



Hirst's contact with the visceral realities of the slaughtered animal is far more that of the supermarket shopper than the butcher. In discussing the sourcing of animals for his works he has said 'I'd like to be able to order one over the phone... That would be perfect.'<sup>74</sup> Helen Simpson points out that 'Damien had the idea, but it was his 'fabricator' who carried it out'.<sup>75</sup>



33. Damien Hirst, *Away from the Flock*, 1994.

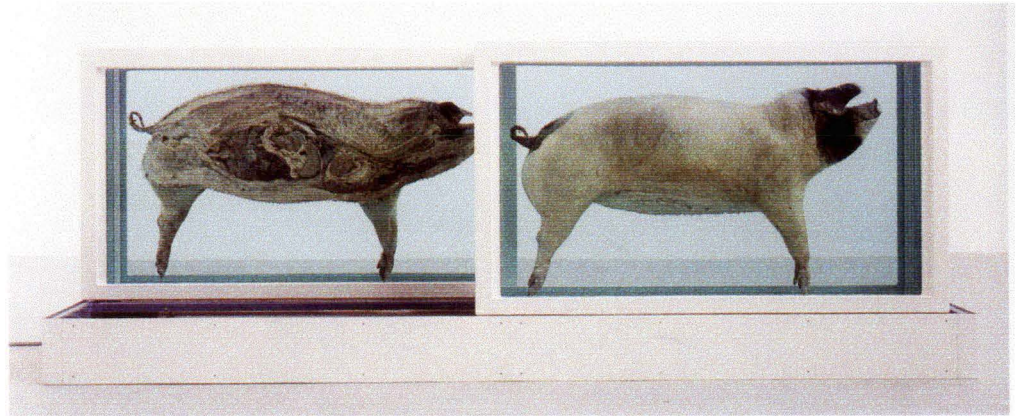
On the surface, the art of Sue Coe, Ivan Durrant, Herman Nitsch and Damien Hirst appears to share common ground; all have made substantial bodies of work depicting or using farm animals as well as relying on shock to elicit a response from the viewer. However, the artistic intentions of these artists differ greatly. Where the works of Coe and Durrant aim to provoke empathy for the animals incorporated within them, for Hirst and Nitsch the animal is merely an object. In Coe's work we again see the anthropomorphic device of presenting the animal front on, and she often gives the animals' faces expressions that suggest emotion. Durrant's naming of the cow ('Beverley') is a similar anthropomorphic device that is employed so that we identify with the animal and feel sympathy for her plight. Hirst, on the other hand, is rather more Cartesian in his attitude toward animals, depicting the animal from the side as an object, a machine whose inner workings are revealed for our voyeuristic fascination. In two works, *Couple Fucking Dead (Twice)*<sup>76</sup> and *This Little Piggy Went to Market, This Little Piggy Stayed at Home*, a machine is incorporated into the works that makes the carcasses move. In the former hydraulics are used to make a

<sup>74</sup> Ibid p 132

<sup>75</sup> Simpson, Helen, 'Meat for Thought' *Modern Painters*, Vol 10, spring 1997, p 95.



flayed cow and a bull copulate, and in the latter a pig has been sawn in half and the two halves, which have been preserved in separate tanks, are motorised so that they move backward and forward, occasionally meeting so that the sliced animal becomes whole again. Of the former work Hirst said, ‘...they’re just these peeled cows. One’s just stood upright, and the other one goes on its back, giving it a really tragic, slow fuck. They’re both cows, so it doesn’t matter. And they’ll just rot.’<sup>77</sup> Of the latter work he remarked ‘I like the way one half moves like a bacon slicer.’<sup>78</sup>



34. Damien Hirst, *This Little Piggy Went to Market, This Little Piggy Stayed Home*, 1996.

The work of these four artists might be seen to reflect extremes in attitudes toward food animals in contemporary western society at a time when the lives of these animals are more distant and removed from our lives than ever before in the history of human-animal relationships. On one hand this detachment has led to an extraordinary objectification of these animals, where they have become a part of a high-tech industry that renders them (physically and metaphorically) into objects. As Alexander Cockburn points out in his introduction to Sue Coe's book *Dead Meat*, the meat industry is 'stoutly Cartesian for obvious reasons'. He quotes an executive from a meat company who wrote that 'the breeding sow should be thought of, and treated as, a valuable piece of machinery whose function is to pump out baby pigs like a sausage machine'.<sup>79</sup> In opposition to this view is the animal rights movement, which, with a focus on the animal as an individual, has become an effective and high profile voice campaigning for an end to animal suffering, acting in effect, as society's conscience. In a recent exhibition catalogue American artist, Mark Ryden, writes about another Austrian artist, Flatz who 'recently made the news when he dropped a

<sup>76</sup> Despite a thorough search I have been unable to find an image of this work. It was produced for Hirst's first US solo show but was barred from being put on display by New York public health officials as the animals were not preserved and were intended to rot.

<sup>77</sup> Simpson, *Modern Painters*, Vol 10, spring 1997, p 94.

<sup>78</sup> Baker, 2000, p 85.

<sup>79</sup> Coe, 1996, p 7.

dead cow from a helicopter in Berlin. An animal loving teenager attempted to legally stop the performance [but] the court rejected the complaint as the cow had the legal status of food'.<sup>80</sup> In considering this issue Ryden asks 'At what exact point does the animal cross the line and become meat?'<sup>81</sup> This is an important question.

Despite respect for the issues that are dealt with in Durrant's animal 'happenings', the intentional death of an animal in the name of art is indefensible. As such, the work of Nitsch and Hirst is of particular concern to me. Reactions to Hirst's and Nitsch's animal works vary; however, the one response that is rarely expressed is that of empathy for the animals themselves. They have become objects, and perhaps the viewer's lack of empathy or sympathy is unsurprising given the artist's comments above. My concern at the use of animals in the work of Nitsch and Hirst centres on one core issue – that of respect. It is of course significant that these artists choose to use animals that we eat. These domestic 'livestock' are seen to be unnatural and as such we do not respect or admire them. They have become mere objects whose lives, and deaths are inconsequential. One might ask how people would have reacted if Hirst and Nitsch had used animals for which most humans still felt some sort of empathy admiration such as dogs, cats, tigers, or dolphins?<sup>82</sup>

### **An alternative approach – the animal installations of Carsten Höller and Rosemarie Trockel**

Since 1996 Carsten Höller and Rosemarie Trockel have collaborated on a number of complex installation projects that investigate human-animal relationships via works that involve the presence of both people and animals. At least ten projects have so far been staged using silverfish, mosquitos, pigeons, hens and pigs, but all of these projects pose essentially the same questions; What is an animal? What is a human? How do humans and animals relate to each other?

It is difficult to discuss this work, having only experienced it through printed images, written reviews and descriptions, however, the importance of this ongoing investigation by two well-respected contemporary artists into human-animal relationships cannot be overlooked. Both Trockel and Höller have pursued studies in areas other than fine art – in Trockel's case she has studied anthropology, sociology,

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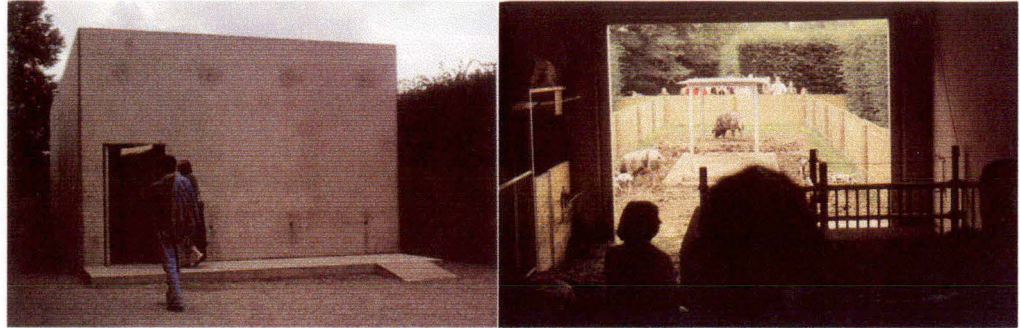
<sup>80</sup> M. Ryden, *Bunnies and Bees*, exhibition catalogue, Grand Central Press, California 2002, section 32 (no page numbers listed).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Hirst's preserved shark is the odd one out here, as it is the only wild animal. Tellingly, it is also the only animal that Hirst has confessed to feeling some regret about, saying that he wished he hadn't had it especially caught and killed.



theology and mathematics, while Höller has a background in agricultural science and is a specialist in insect behaviour. This has led to a unique body of work that looks simultaneously at the behaviour of, and relationship between, the human and non-human animal from the point of view of science, sociology, anthropology and art.



35. Carsten Höller & Rosemarie Trockel, *Ein Haus für Schweine und Menschen*, 1997.

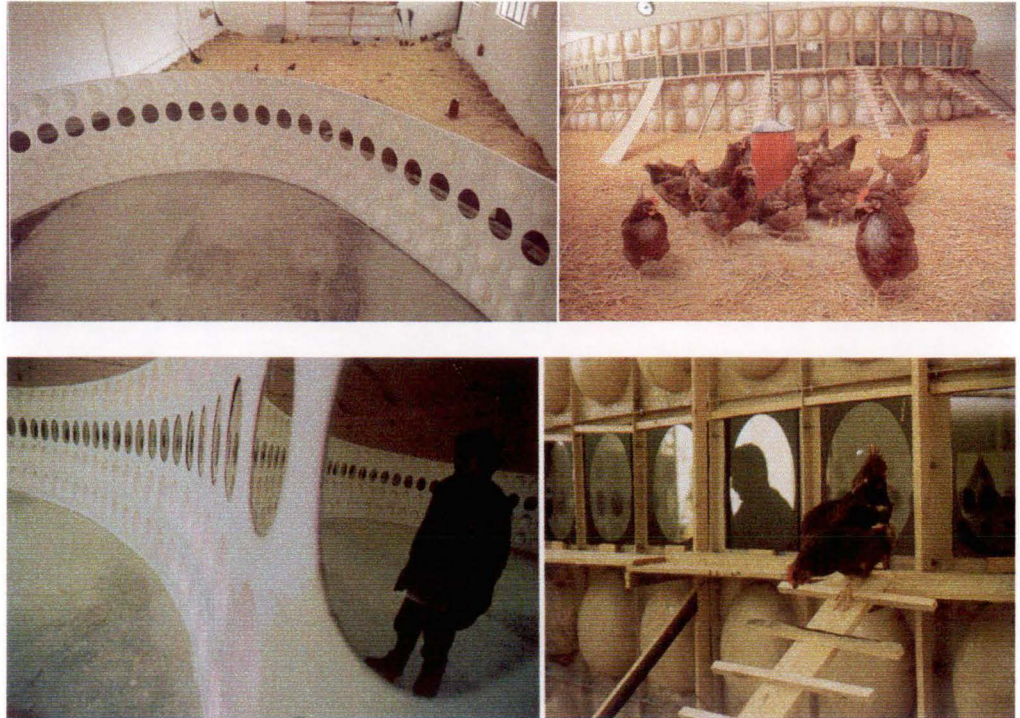
*Ein Haus für Schweine und Menschen* (A House for Pigs and People), probably the best known of the works in this series, was exhibited at Documenta X in 1997. In this installation people were invited to enter a bunker-like building surrounded by high hedges. Once inside one could relax on carpet arranged on a concrete incline to view through a plate glass window a family of pigs, including a sow feeding her litter. The pigs were housed in an enclosure with bedding, feed and shelter. However, if one that the glass was transparent from one side only – the people could see the pigs, but the pigs could not see the people looking at them, what the pigs saw was a mirror.<sup>83</sup>

Another project in this series was *Addina*.<sup>84</sup> In this work, a building contained forty-eight hens behind the wall of a huge egg-shaped room. The visitors who entered the building were invited to eat the eggs laid by the hens. The hens could climb up ramps to view the people eating their eggs, however the people could not see the hens, they could only hear and smell them.<sup>85</sup>

Both of these works involved the audience in a limited sensory experience of the animals. The glass screen through which the pigs were viewed objectified the animals by presenting them as an image which could not return the viewer's gaze. With *Addina*, the smelt, heard but unseen chickens had to be imagined. In both cases people were distanced from these animals, and allowed only a limited experience of them that did not include any interaction.

<sup>83</sup> Based on the description by D. Birnbaum in 'Mice and Man', *Art Forum*, vol 39, no 6, February 2001, pp 115-117

<sup>84</sup> Sicilian for 'chicken'.



36. Carsten Holler & Rosemarie Trockel, *Addina*, 1997.

In a book resulting from *A House for Pigs and People*, Trockel and Höller posed a long series of questions concerned with the relationship between humans and other animals. These questions force the reader to confront issues to do with meat eating and violence, for example, ‘Do races living on a vegetarian diet behave differently than meat-eaters when it comes to territorial expansion?’; ‘Is there a link between Hitler’s vegetarian habits and what he did?’; ‘Why is it that world-wide many more men kill than women?’; ‘How would it be if we ourselves had to kill the animals we eat and could no longer delegate the unpleasant side of it?’.<sup>85</sup>

This series of works asks us to question our relationship with animals. These works do not operate on the didactic, brutal level of Sue Coe, nor do they try and pretend that the political and social implications of the animal as represented in art are unimportant. As Daniel Birmbaum states:

Höller and Trockel’s houses for animals and humans do not try to blur the border between man and other species, nor do they actively renegotiate the traditional notion of humanism. But their untiring exposure of the line of

<sup>85</sup> Birmbaum, *Art Forum*, vol 39, February 2001, p 116.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid* p 115.



demarcation forces the viewer to ask the same questions over and over: What is animal? What is man?<sup>87</sup>

The work of Trockel and Höller, while dealing with ‘food’ animals such as pigs and chickens, approaches the subject by investigating the lives of these animals, rather than their deaths. In the work of artists such as Coe, Durrant, Nitsch and Hirst, the shock we feel at the death of the animals is only possible because their commercial slaughtering is so removed from the average urban life. However, it is not only the animal’s death that is hidden. The lives of intensively farmed animals, where the vast majority are housed in large numbers in enclosed sheds out of public view, has resulted in a near total lack of interaction of any sort between humans and animals such as pigs and chickens. It is no coincidence that these are the animals of choice for these two major installations by Trockel and Höller. The audience is offered the opportunity to experience live farm animals; but the experience, like our day-to-day relationship to these animals, is incomplete. In the installations of Trockel and Höller, the animals are presented as living, breathing, sentient beings, but they are also part of an artwork. As such we might ask, are these pigs and chickens nature or culture – or both?

### **Conclusion**

Since industrialisation there have been huge changes in the way that animals and humans inter-relate and artists have borne witness to these changes. The artists and writers discussed in this paper have all contributed to the never-ending discourse on the relationship between humans and non-human animals, which affects how we understand ourselves and the world we live in. The key issue of the nature-culture dichotomy as it relates to the representation of animals – specifically food animals – cannot be understood outside this historical and contemporary context.

From the time of Paulus Potter, through modernism to contemporary art, artists who have chosen to work with animals struggle to be taken seriously, especially when the animals are observed from life rather than presented as stylised or symbolic beasts. Amongst contemporary artists there still exists a general disinterest in animals – especially farm animals – as subject matter. The artists discussed above should be seen as exceptions. The absence of farm animals in contemporary art reflects the low status of these animals within contemporary society and a general ignorance of their lives and deaths.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid p 119



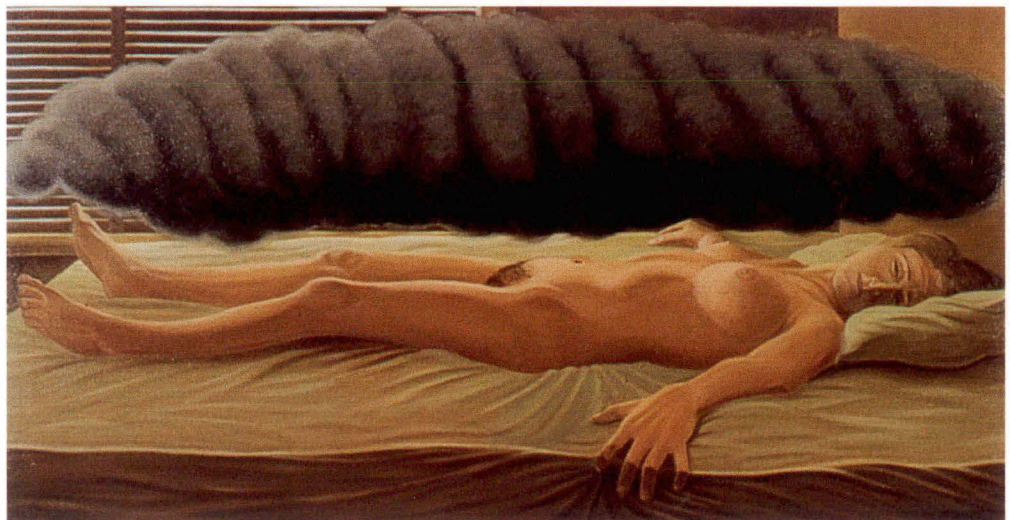
The animal painters from the seventeenth until the early twenty-first centuries discussed here have been influential on the research project both in term of content and style and for the ability of their works to reflect the nature of human-animal relationships during their lifetimes. The contemporary artists on the other hand, are of less relevance for the technical approaches they have taken, but are of great interest for the striking differences in attitudes towards farm animals demonstrated in their work. The variety in the use and depiction of farm animals in their works accords with the complexity of human-animal relations in contemporary western society. On one hand these animals are treated with a general disdain, while on the other hand the animal rights movement campaigns with growing respect and effectiveness for radical changes to the way animals are used and regarded by humans.

The final suite of paintings, submitted within this thesis acknowledges the confused status of farm animals within the nature-culture dichotomy and they are also a response to the contemporary, detached and mediated experience of these animals in the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries. These paintings are discussed in Part Three.

## PART THREE – HOW THE INVESTIGATION WAS PURSUED

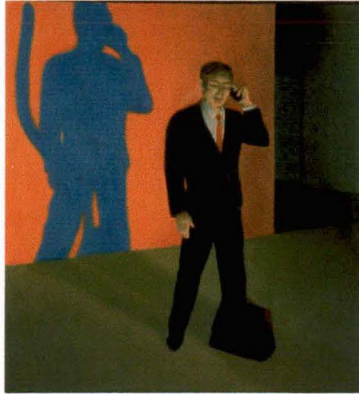
### The origins of the project

The research has its origin in the late 1990s with a body of work that investigated the use of animal iconography in representations of evil. The use of animal attributes such as horns, tails and cloven hooves to portray evil, underscores our discomfort with the notion that such dark forces could be a part of human nature and reflects our desire to see ourselves as different and separate from other animals. Although perhaps less common in our increasingly scientific, post-enlightenment world, the need to define some aspects of our behaviour as non-human persists and is reflected in our use of bestial terms when describing a particularly heinous human deed. The initial proposal of the research was to devise an alternative visual iconography for representing evil. Underlying this proposition was a desire to determine how the symbolic use of animal iconography might reflect our attitudes toward non-human animals and more broadly, the natural world. I began using shadows, holes and clouds in an attempt to find apt visual imagery to portray the ‘dark’ side of human nature and the world in which we live. The shadow as a metaphor for evil seemed to be particularly appropriate; a shadow is a natural phenomenon, it’s presence is defined by an absence, and it is intangible – all characteristics which could be identified with the concept of evil. This work was exhibited in a solo show in Canberra in March 2000.<sup>89</sup>



37. Yvette Watt, *Dark Presence*, 1999, oil on linen, 92 x 183cm

<sup>89</sup> *Tales from the Dark Side*, Beaver Galleries, Canberra, March 2000. Illustrations of earlier work can be found in Appendix Two, pp 56 – 59.



38. Yvette Watt, *Caught in the Light*, 1999/2000, Oil on linen, 111 x 101.5cm



39. Yvette Watt, *Self-Reflection*, 2000, oil on linen, 50 x 76cm

About halfway into the research project the work began to shift focus. This was due to a number of factors and while the initial proposal and the eventual outcomes may appear dramatically different, the transition has been a logical one.

When I commenced the MFA I had already begun to explore the depiction of evil in my work and in retrospect the amount of time spent working with this subject prior to undertaking formal study may have weakened my ability to maintain a prolonged investigation in this direction. However, of greater significance is the fact that the search for alternatives to animal iconography for representing evil, such as shadows, clouds or holes, brought to the fore the question of whether animals were necessary in the work.<sup>90</sup> Ironically, having spent years producing work that sought to emphasise animals' presence, they became absent in some of the new work and I became acutely aware of how essential they were to my artistic practice. Ultimately, once I stopped to consider this, it was difficult to come to terms with the prospect of not working with animal imagery. Aspects of works produced as part of the research, which were only indirectly concerned with the idea of evil, seemed to offer more potential for new work than many of the pieces produced that were dealing more directly with the ideas behind the initial research proposal.

#### **The transition to the new work**

Relatively early on in the research, I began collecting plastic models with the intention of using them to create theatrical dioramas which would explore ways of

<sup>90</sup> In fact my notes for my critique of October 19 1999, just 4 months after I started the research, already indicate uneasiness with the prospect of removing animals from the work.

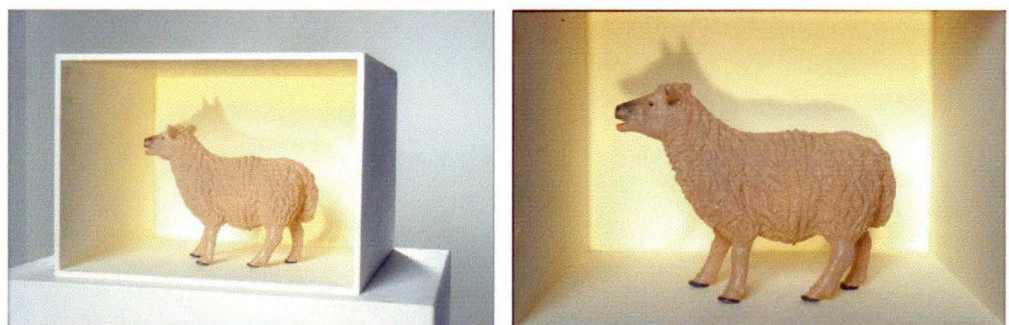


representing evil. At the time it seemed likely that the dioramas themselves would be the work, rather than paintings based on the dioramas. One of the major influences in this approach was the *Day of the Dead* dioramas that I had seen and purchased whilst in Mexico in the mid 1990s. These humorous hand-made miniatures of skeletons and devils enacting scenes from everyday life offered the potential for a new approach to the subject, both conceptually and technically.

40. Day of the Dead diorama, c1995, larger work 6.2cm (h) (Maker unknown).



Ultimately, only three object based 3D works were realised. These were *Alter Ego*, *Two Thousand and One* and *Impact*, all of which were produced in 2001. In *Alter Ego*, an open fronted box houses a model sheep that appears to cast the shadow of a wolf, in a playful depiction of the metaphor of the wolf in sheep's clothing. In *Two Thousand and One* a figurine of a businessman casts a long shadow made up of two thousand animals in the form of model sheep, cows, pigs, chicken and fish – the approximate number of these animals consumed by a meat-eating Australian in their lifetime.<sup>91</sup> In *Impact*, hundreds of model animals were placed on the floor in such a way that only the shape of a human figure was left uncovered.



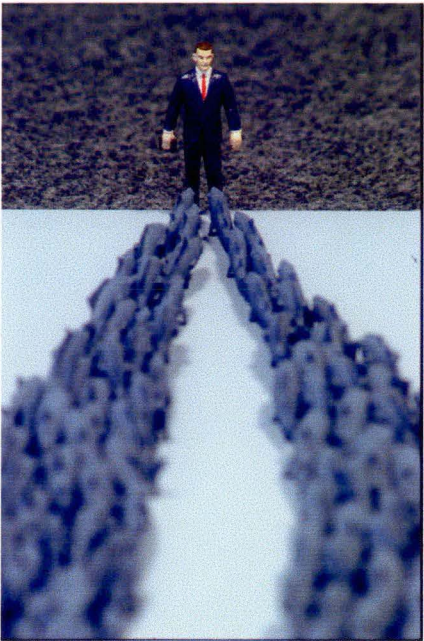
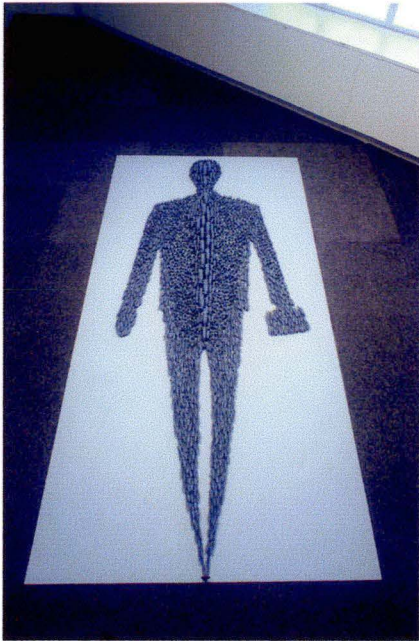
41. Yvette Watt, *Alter-ego*, 2001, 21 x 29 x 31cm, MDF, Perspex, plastic model sheep.

Other than the fact that this was my first real foray into object-art, the most significant thing about two of these pieces (*Alter Ego* and *Two Thousand and One*) was that, for the first time in my work, the animals used were farm animals. More

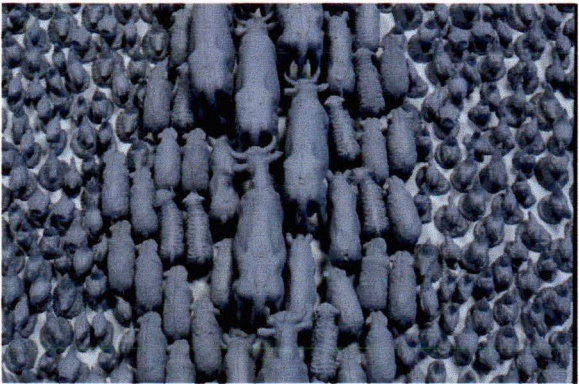
<sup>91</sup> Based on information from Animals Australia that was sourced from an article in the *Herald Sun* newspaper of July 18 1997.



importantly, in *Two Thousand and One* the work began to question the human use of farm animals by suggesting that in eating these animals we could be seen to be made up of them (you are what you eat), but also that such animals live in the shadow of human control over their existence.<sup>92</sup>



42. Yvette Watt, *Two Thousand and One*, 2001, cast polyurethane, enamel paint, MDF, 244 x 122cm (details above right and right).



43. Yvette Watt, *Impact*, 2001, 200 x 100cm, plastic model animals.



<sup>92</sup> Despite a long-term involvement in the animal rights movement, my work has never overtly addressed specific issues of animal exploitation.



At around the same time (late 2000/early 2001) a series of three small paintings were produced for exhibition. With no pressure for these works to conform to the research project, I was able to explore the possibility of using some of the models as the subjects of paintings. Three relatively high quality models – a pig, a sheep and a bull – were posed, lit and photographed in close-up from front-on using a macro lens. The three small paintings that were produced remained faithful to the photographs of the animals, with only the background colour altered by painting it a deep red. The title, *Food for Thought*, made reference to these animals as both a food source (object) and a source of ideas (subject), or, as John Berger has noted, ‘Animals supply examples for the mind as well as food for the body. They carry not only loads, but principles.’<sup>93</sup> The *Food for Thought* series also confirmed for me the central importance of painting in my practice, a much more enjoyable process than that involved in the creation of the sculptural works<sup>94</sup>.



44. *Food for Thought (Sheep, Pig, Bull)*, 2000, three panels, each 28 x 19cm.

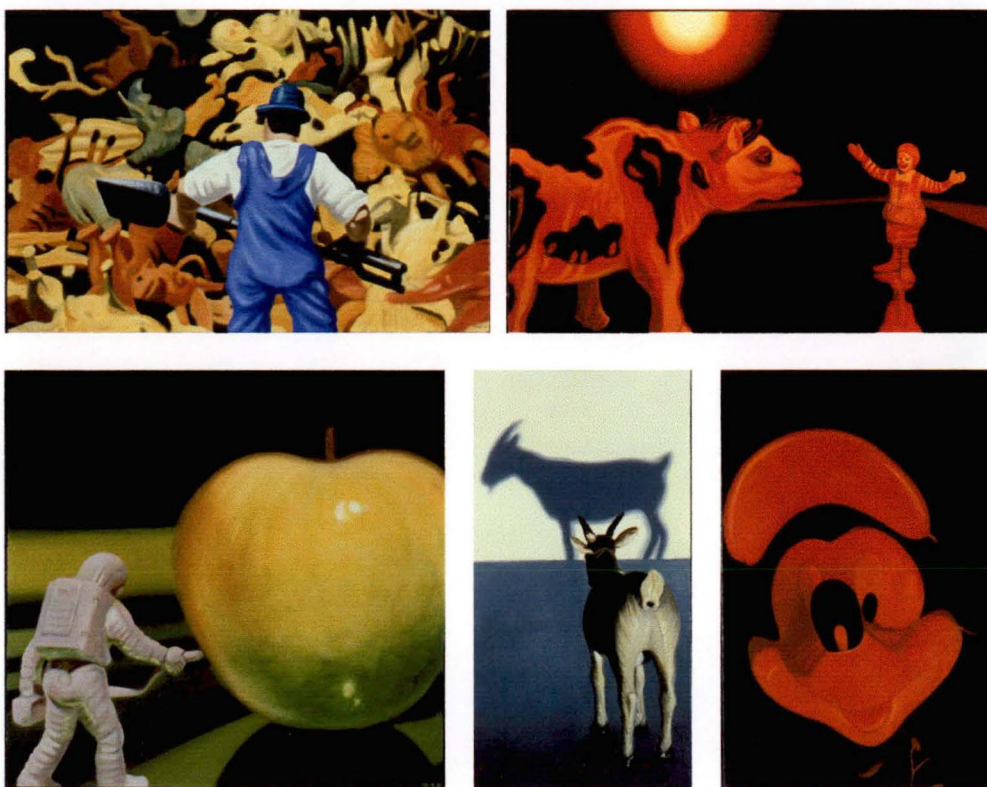
Clearly *Alter Ego*, *Two Thousand and One* and the *Food for Thought* series were the transitional works between the initial and current investigations. While *Alter Ego* and *Two Thousand and One* were still concerned with the depiction of evil via the use of the shadow as a metaphor, they also alerted me to the possibility of using farm animals as the subject of the work. This potential was further emphasised by the success of the *Food for Thought* series; surprisingly compelling images considering the apparently simple idea that led to their production. The ambiguous scale and a certain anthropomorphic quality in the animals in the paintings - an effect that resulted from the close-up, front-on portraits of the models - revealed the possibility

<sup>93</sup> R. Willis, *Man and Beast*, Granada, Frogmore, 1975, p 9.

<sup>94</sup> I had a severe allergic reaction to the two-part polyurethane I was using to cast the two thousand animals in *Two Thousand and one*, which precluded the possibility of my ever using this material again.

of a body of work that could use models to explore the relationship between humans and animals. Furthermore the stylistic artificiality which occurred in painting from photographs of models of animals seemed to reflect the growing distance in urban lives between humans and these supposedly familiar animals.

At the same as these works were being made, I was also working on a series of paintings for a solo exhibition in Perth.<sup>95</sup> At the time it was my intention that this body of work would conform to my research project on the representation of evil, but I felt compelled to begin a new body of work using photographs of the models. A day was spent photographing the models in various compositions and settings, often without any prior plan of how the scenes would be organised. From the 50 odd photos taken, a relatively small number of images were chosen for their potential as paintings. I was eventually able to complete five paintings based on these photographs,<sup>96</sup> and these were some of the more exciting works in the exhibition.



Clockwise from top left:

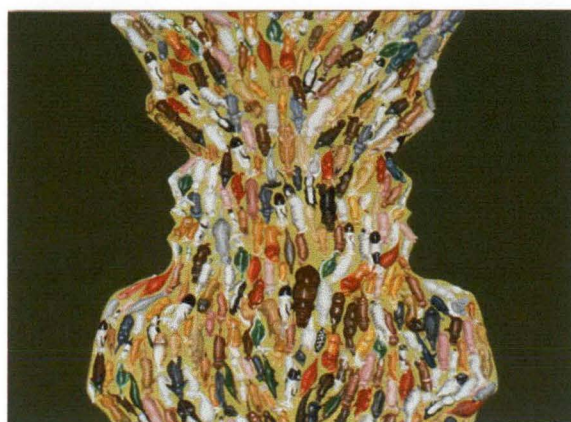
- 45. *Cleanup*, 2001, oil on board, 30 x 45cm.
- 46. *Irreconcilable Differences (Mad Cow)*, 2001, oil on board, 30 x 45cm
- 47. *Green Day*, 2001, oil on board, 33.8cm x 35.5cm,
- 48. *Goatscape*, 2001, oil on board, 30 x 16cm
- 49. *Mad Mickey*, 2001, oil on linen, 76 x 50.5cm,

<sup>95</sup> *Shadowlands*, Artplace, Perth, June 2001.

<sup>96</sup> These works are *Goat-scape*, *Mad Mickey*, *Irreconcilable Differences (Mad Cow)*, *Green Day* and *Cleanup*.



A few months after the solo show I was invited to take part in an exhibition of self-portraits. The invitation was used as an opportunity to further explore the use of models, photographs and shadows. The work was based on a diagram that is often used to demonstrate the figure-ground relationship in two-dimensional images. In Lavater-esque<sup>97</sup> manner, a silhouette or shadow of my profile looked in from both sides of the picture-plane. The vase-like shape created by the space between the two profiles was filled with dozens of model animals viewed from above. The title of *Figure-Field (self portrait)* alluded to both the pictorial field, and the field in a pastoral sense. The focus shifts with either the animals or my profiles taking the positive or negative space depending on the way you look at the image. The logic of the space is unclear and acts as a metaphor for the complex subject-object relationship humans have with the non-human animal world.



50. Yvette Watt, *Figure-Field (self portrait)*, 2001, oil on linen, 61 x 83cm

Aware of the anthropomorphism in the *Food for Thought* series, I next produced a work that intentionally exploited this ascription of human characteristics to non-human animals, as a way of exploring issues of sameness and difference between humans and other animals. The painting was made up of nine small panels, with each panel being a portrait of an animal painted in monochrome. These portraits were based on photographs I had collected from a variety of sources for their anthropomorphic qualities. This work helped rekindle an enthusiasm for finding new ways of exploring the relationship between the way animals are portrayed visually, and the ways we think about them.

### The latest work

In the introduction to the second edition of his book *Picturing the Beast*, Steve Baker describes the book's purpose as being 'to suggest that the animal [can] only be

<sup>97</sup>Johann Caspar Lavater was an 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher whose theory of physiognomy included the idea that a person's character could be determined by examining a silhouette of their profile.



considered and understood through its representations. There [is] no unmediated access to the “real” animal<sup>98</sup>. This relationship between depiction and understanding is of critical importance to the final body of work that uses toys, model animals and photographs as its source.

When organising my model collection into ‘types’ I began to notice how varied the representations of the individual animals were and I was also fascinated by the crudeness of some of the models. I was struck by the irony that farm animals - who populate the planet in such vast numbers; whose form is the result of continuous human intervention; whose lives are under constant human control and whose bodies are served up on countless dinner tables every day - could be so little understood by the person who designed the model. What also disturbed me was the possibility that these crude, inaccurate, at times almost unrecognisable models, which are designed as children’s toys, might, in the absence of any actual contact with the real animals influence the child’s understanding of them. Certainly the increasing urbanisation of western societies has led to a growing separation between city and country with the result that fewer and fewer children have any actual contact with the farm animals they may be eating every day.<sup>99</sup>

With this in mind, I set about producing paintings that explored the strangeness of these crude model farm animals. I chose as models a cow, pig, sheep and chicken of the type found in cheap bags of model animals, and began work on two separate but related series of paintings which would emphasise the absurdity of these models’ ability to function as a reliable representation of the real animal.

For the first of the two series of work, I sourced photographs of cows, pigs, sheep and chickens from breeder’s manuals and Internet sites, choosing images that depicted these animals as prime examples of their breed. I then photographed the model animals, being careful to arrange the orientation of the model and the lighting to match that in the original source photographs. The four eventual paintings were composed of the background from the “best of breed” photograph, with the real animal replaced by a model depicted at the same scale as the animal in the original

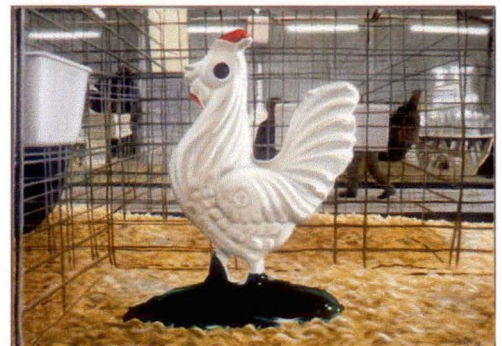
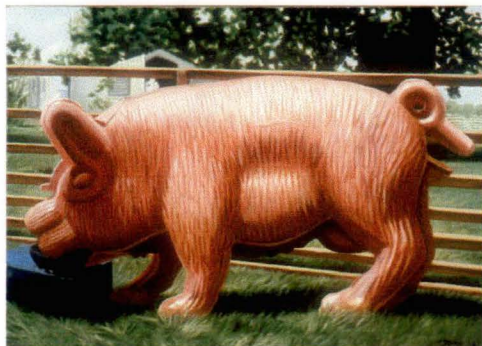
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<sup>98</sup>S. Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, 2001, p xvi.

<sup>99</sup> A recent newspaper article covered a survey undertaken by the Kondinin Group, an Australian farm improvement organization, that revealed that 88 per cent of Australian school children had never visited a farm but that in 1997 this figure was only 20 percent. The survey also revealed that 25 percent of school children were not aware that yoghurt originated from cows and that one in five Grade 5 children did not realise that beef came from cattle. G. Warner, ‘Taking the Bush to the School for a Taste of Reality’, *The Saturday Mercury*, June 8 2002, p 3.

photograph. The entire image was painted with a uniformly high degree of photographic realism in order to acknowledge the original source as photographic and also to help bring cohesiveness to the final images.

As anticipated, the result of this constructed image is that the crude models appear even more ludicrous when placed in the context of a farm or agricultural show. However, in addition to exaggerating the strangeness of the model animals, the paintings also questioned the logic of the supposedly 'natural' setting for these farm animals. Ultimately the paintings emphasised the complex artificiality of the farm, and of the animals that are kept there, where both the environment and the animals that inhabit it are the product of ongoing human intervention and control. Both the idealised farm environment and the farm animals themselves, whilst mediated by human intervention, are also thought of as 'natural', particularly in comparison to urban areas. They are at once both nature and culture. The paintings allude to the falseness of this idealised farm, which is being rapidly replaced with factory farms and feedlots, while the strange animals that inhabit the paintings invite consideration of the issues in the genetic engineering of farm animals.



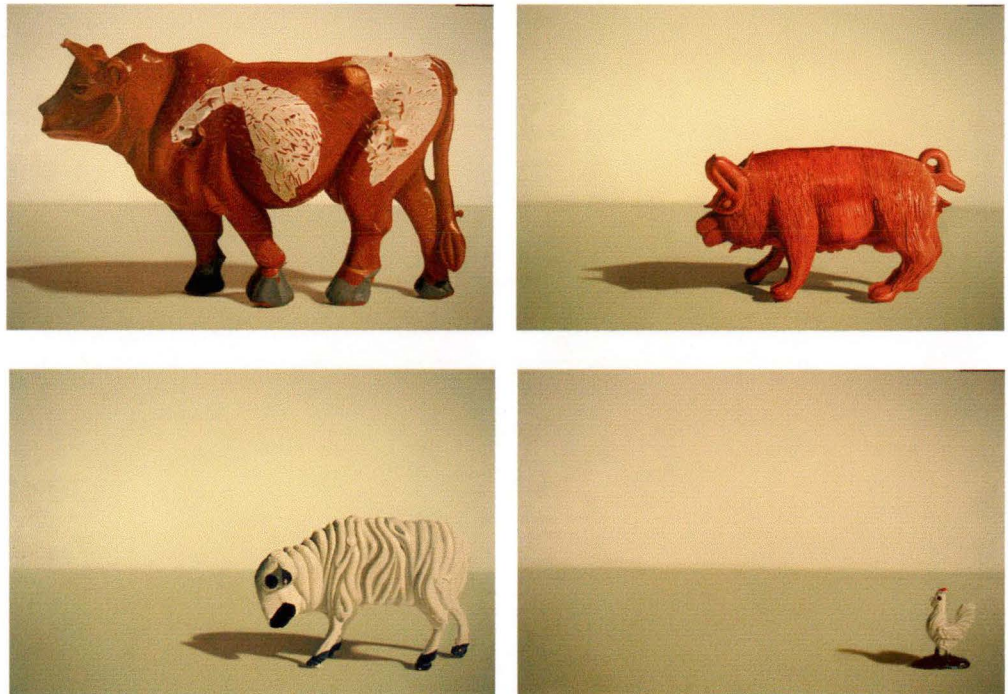
51- 54. Yvette Watt, *A Model Animal* (series - cow, sheep, pig, chicken), 2002, oil on linen, four paintings, each 40.5 x 56.5cm.

The title for the series, *Model Animal (Cow, Sheep, Pig, Chicken)* recognises that the animals in the paintings are in fact plastic models and also that the original animals in



the photographs from breeders manuals and the like, are presented as ideal models of their type.

The second body of work takes the same four model animals, but this time the works rely on changing the scale of the model. Four large canvases accommodate one of each of the model animals, with each model scaled up to the size that an actual animal of this type would be in reality, so that the model cow, for example, is scaled up from approximately 4cm to 1.5 metres tall. Once again, each of the models was photographed under controlled lighting, with the photographs becoming the main source of information for the paintings. However in this series of work the background was kept intentionally minimal. The subtle suggestion of a horizon and the cool grey-green colour are suggestive of both pastoral and domestic settings. The only other compositional element active in the paintings is the shadow of the animal, projected forward and with a tinge of red to it.



55 - 58. Yvette Watt, *Dumb Animals* (series – cow, pig, sheep, chicken), 2003, oil on canvas, four paintings, each 180 x 270cm.

The title of *Dumb Animal* (Cow, Sheep, Pig, Chicken) was chosen to reflect a number of issues to do with the representation and perception of farm animals. Firstly, it refers to the term of pity or contempt used when describing non-human animals, suggesting their inferiority to humans. Secondly, it reflects the perceived lack of language in non-human animals and thus their inability to speak for themselves to protest their plight, which has prompted some animals rights advocates to describe

themselves as ‘a voice for the animals’.<sup>100</sup> Thirdly it refers to the stupidity of the models, which, whilst apparently representing an actual animal, are so unlike the animal that they appear mutant. Finally, the word ‘dumb’ refers to the stripped back minimalism of the image itself, where the animal exists in a non-space, redolent of the seemingly empty, nihilistic ‘dumbness’ of some postmodern art.

**A new way of working – the role of the photograph and the model in the new work.**

Until late 2000 I had never painted directly from photographs. I had *used* photographs at times both as sources for ideas and also to help clarify such things as the way a figure might look in a certain pose, but had never sought to refer directly to the photograph. This all changed with the *Food for Thought* series where the model became the primary source of imagery.

When I first became interested in working from the models I soon realised that their small size made working from life extremely difficult, as I could not clearly see enough detail without either moving the object closer to me, or myself closer to the object. As soon as either moved I lost the relationship between the model and the painting that I was working on. I quickly realised that photographing the object would provide a solution to this problem. By using a macro lens I was able to photograph the models at close range and although this way of working results in a very shallow focal range within the photograph, the areas in focus were captured by the camera in sharp detail. Additionally, photographing the objects allowed me to arrange specific lighting and positioning of the models, impossible if I were working from life; and finally, the detail revealed in the photograph helped to make the scale of the objects ambiguous (as does the point of view from which the photograph is taken).

Importantly, in making direct reference to the *look* of the photograph when producing the paintings, the point is made that the animal is being *observed*; however, a layering of observational abstraction has obscured the original animal on which the depictions were based. It occurred to me that this distance between the original animal and the painting of the photograph of the model could be seen to reflect the mechanisms humans construct in order to distance ourselves from the guilt we might feel at how we treat these animals.

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<sup>100</sup> This phrase was commonly used by the organisation Animal Liberation in the 1970s and

While on the surface the nature of the work appears to have undergone a dramatic transformation both conceptually and technically, the core issue at the heart of the research remains; how are animals depicted, and how does our depiction of animals reflect our attitude toward them? The study of the representation of farm animals has been fertile ground for exploring both our relationship with these animals specifically, and, also how this relationship might reflect the way we think about non-human animals in general.



## PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

The body of work that has come from this research reflects upon the status of farm animals in contemporary western society, where they exist in a sort of limbo, being at once nature and culture, subject and object, populous but marginalised. The history of the visual representation of animals in art and popular culture is central to this project. As such, the imagery in the artwork is derived from secondary sources, so that the work focuses on the animal *depicted* rather than the animal itself. This reflects the positioning of the work in the context of contemporary western society. The power of images within our lives is profound and much of what we know is informed by images from the media and popular culture in general. This project offers a new way of ‘looking at’ these animals, by recognising and utilising the mediated image to question the relationship between depiction and understanding.

The project has successfully achieved its aims through the production of a suite of works that prompts the viewer to question their understanding of the farm animal. The models and photographs used as source material for the work manifest the transformation of nature (the animal) into culture (the object/image representing the animal); a shift that also transforms the animal from sentient being into food. The use of cheap plastic model animals emphasises the object/commodity status of these animals within our society, while alluding to the mass production that is an important aspect of the modern animal agriculture industry. The strangeness of some of the models, so unlike the animal in actuality, points to our ignorance of them and prompts the viewer to consider the continual modification of their forms through selective breeding and genetic manipulation.

It is significant that the models used are miniatures. As Susan Stewart points out ‘There are no miniatures in nature; the miniature is a cultural product...’<sup>101</sup> Thus the model acts as a signifier of the cultural understanding of the animal. These miniatures allow a kind of anthropocentrism that places the human in control of a theatrical tableau that ‘presents a projection of the world of everyday life... in such a way as to test the relationship between materiality and meaning’.<sup>102</sup> However in restoring the models back to life size in the *Dumb Animals* series, this power play is disrupted. The transformation of the original animal to a miniature representation of the animal and then the enlargement of the miniature back to life size also adds further complexity to

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<sup>101</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*, John Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1984, p 55.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid* p 57.

the evolutionary artificiality that is evident in the paintings of photographs of models of animals. This complex, layered abstraction can be seen as a metaphor for the detached, mediated relationship between humans and farm animals in the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries.

The plastic models are also nostalgic, conjuring up memories of childhood games that recreated an idealised farm where all the animals existed in an imagined pastoral harmony that avoided any suggestion of the less pleasant side of the farming industry. As John Berger notes, the proliferation of toy animals coincided with the radical industrialisation of the western world in the nineteenth century that saw animals begin to disappear from daily life.<sup>103</sup> It would seem that these toy farm sets are stuck firmly in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe where animals were kept in fields and barns and were known individually by the farmer.<sup>104</sup> This ignorance of the lives of farm animals in contemporary society is perpetuated by nostalgic representations of farms where intensive piggeries, battery farms and slaughterhouses are unknown. Nostalgia is also a powerful and seductive force that encourages a wide cross section of people to engage with these paintings of model animals that are at once familiar and strange.

This research project is located within the history of the depiction of domestic animals in Western Art. The four paintings titled *Dumb Animals* are reminiscent of the large-scale work of earlier animal painters such as Potter and Stubbs, where the animals are depicted life-size and painted with great attention to detail. Of particular relevance here is Potter's *The Young Bull*, for its extraordinary realism and the demanding presence of the main character. The androgenous cow/bull in the *Dumb Animals* series commands a similar presence to Potter's bull<sup>105</sup> and is painted with the same attention to detail. However this beast is notable for the strange and confounding disjuncture between the photographic quality of the painted representation and the unreal, unnatural look of the animal depicted.

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<sup>103</sup> Berger, *Selected Essays*, 2001, p 270 & 272.

<sup>104</sup> In discussing this issue in respect to farm imagery in children's book Adrian Franklin suggests that: "The distance between reality and representation is not a refusal to acknowledge and accept the new conditions of animal protein production, but the impossibility of recommending the new intensive production systems as suitable human moral tales for children." I disagree with the first part of this proposition. These toys and images clearly reflect an ignorance of these animals' lives and a clear reluctance to accept that intensive farming systems are the norm. (Franklin, 1999, p127).

<sup>105</sup> While Potter's painting is a more complex composition in its inclusion of a number of other animals, it would seem that Potter originally intended to paint only the bull and added the other animals later. (See Amy Walsh, Edwin Buijsen, Ben Broos, *Paulus Potter: Paintings, drawings and etchings*, Wanders, Zolle, exhibition catalogue, 1994, p 76.

The paintings of George Stubbs where the horses are presented on a blank background are of great interest for the extreme focus that is placed on the individual animal, which is depicted in isolation rather than in what might be termed its 'natural environment'. In the series *Dumb Animals* the animals are also depicted as individuals against a neutral background, prompting the viewer to consider what they might think of as an appropriate habitat for the mutant animals that populate the paintings. The decision to depict the animals singly – as individuals – encompasses a certain irony in that the lives and deaths of real farm animals happen surrounded by large numbers of their own kind. Thus the model chicken, which inhabits just the right hand corner of the huge canvas, is afforded a massive amount of space by comparison with the real animal which is more likely to spend its short life crammed into a shed with tens of thousands of other birds.

Professor Lesley Rogers, a neuroscientist specializing in animal behaviour, points out that; 'The animals we eat or exploit in other ways tend to be devalued relative to [other animals].'<sup>106</sup> This devaluation extends to the art world, which seems willing to accept domestic animals as of sufficient worthiness as subject matter only if they are treated totally without sentiment; the works of George Stubbs, Herman Nitsch, Damien Hirst and to a certain extent, Ivan Durrant are deemed to be of serious interest, where the work of Edwin Landseer and Sue Coe is seen as more problematic. Thus a hierarchy of subject matter that was so clear in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries persists into the twentieth and twenty first centuries, and within this hierarchy, artworks which demonstrate empathetic or respectful treatment of farm animals are seen as very low indeed.

Ultimately, the ability for farm animals to be categorised as both nature and culture points to the inherent weakness of this dichotomy, based as it is on a human arrogance that considers ourselves as cultural beings that are somehow separate from and preferably in control of the 'natural world'. If, as Alison Kubler suggests, 'painting's initial honourable scientific aims [were] to record the natural world'<sup>107</sup> then those that have resulted from this research project are more interested in how we define this 'natural world'. The research has resulted in a consideration of the falseness of the nature-culture dichotomy and the resultant human desire to categorise ourselves as different from (and superior to) all other animals.

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<sup>106</sup> Mike Safe, 'The Cluck Stops Here', *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, May 25 – 26, 2002, p 25.

<sup>107</sup> Alison Kubler, *Sebastian: Contemporary Realist Painting*, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Surfers Paradise, 2000, p 7. (Exhibition catalogue).

It is this complex issue of human identity - of defining the world as nature *or* culture, human *or* animal, that will become the focus for the next body of work. In tackling the issue of anthropomorphism it is probable that the painting *Nine Lives: simple science says don't emote* is the first of a number of paintings that will explore the inter-related issues of sameness and difference between humans and other animals. As one area of investigation into human-animal relations reaches a conclusion, another presents itself.



59. *Nine Lives: simple science says don't emote*, 2001, oil on board, nine panels each 19.5 x 15cm.



## APPENDIX ONE – LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

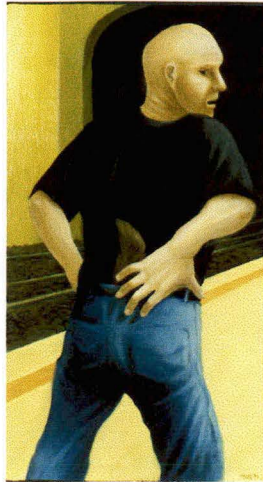
1. Yvette Watt, *From my Bestiary*, nos. 1 – 5, 1984, lino-cuts, each 43 x 36cm.
2. Paulus Potter, *The Young Bull*, 1647, oil on canvas, 235.5 x 339cm.
3. Paulus Potter, *Two Pigs in a Sty*, 1649, oil on canvas, 31 x 44cm.
4. Paulus Potter, *Two Cows and a Bull*, 1647, oil on panel, 48.5 x 37cm.
5. George Stubbs, *Pumpkin and a Stable Lad*, oil on panel, 1774, 80 x 100.9cm.
6. Paulus Potter, *Leopard-Spotted Stallion*, 1649, oil on panel, 28.2 x 24cm.
7. George Stubbs, *Zebra*, 1763, oil on canvas, 103 x 127.5.
8. George Stubbs, *The Anatomy of the Horse*, (Plate IX) 1766.
9. George Stubbs, *Whistlejacket*, 1762, oil on canvas, 292 x 246.4cm.
10. George Stubbs, *Hambletonian, Rubbing Down*, 1799 – 1800, oil on canvas, 209 x, 367.3cm.
11. George Stubbs, *Horse Devoured by a Lion*, c.1763, oil on canvas, 69.2 x 103.5cm.
12. George Stubbs, *Lion Attacking a Horse*, 1769, enamel on copper, 24.3 x 28.2cm.
13. William Ward, *A White Short-horned Heifer*, 1811, coloured mezzotint after Thomas Weaver, 45 x 60cm.
14. George Stubbs, *The Lincolnshire Ox*, 1790, oil on canvas, 66 x 96.5cm.
15. Sir Edwin Landseer, *Wild Cattle of Chillingham*, 1867, oil on canvas, 228.5 x 156.3cm.
16. Sir Edwin Landseer, *Dignity and Impudence*, 1839, oil on canvas, 89 x 69.2cm.
17. Sir Edwin Landseer, *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner*, 1837, oil on panel, 45.7 x 61cm.
18. Sir Edwin Landseer, *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, 1862 – 64, oil on canvas, 91.4cm x 243.8cm.
19. Rosa Bonheur, *Ploughing in the Nivernais*, 1849, oil on canvas, 154 x 260cm.
20. Rosa Bonheur, *The Horse Fair*, 1853 – 55, oil on canvas, 244.5 x 506.8cm.
21. Franz Marc, 1911, *The Large Blue Horses*, oil on canvas, 104.8 x 181cm.
22. Franz Marc, *The Yellow Cow*, 1911, oil on canvas, 140 x 190cm.

23. Franz Marc, *Animal Destinies (The Trees Show Their Rings, the Animals their, Veins)*, 1913, oil on canvas, 196 x 266cm
24. Sue Coe, *Up to Six Minutes to Die*, From *Dead Meat*, Sue Coe, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995.
25. Sue Coe, *Sketch book page*, From *Dead Meat*, Sue Coe, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995.
26. Sue Coe, *Cold Cuts*, From *Dead Meat*, Sue Coe, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995.
27. Sue Coe, *Wall Street*, From *Dead Meat*, Sue Coe, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995.
28. Ivan Durrant, *Beverley the Amazing Performing Cow*, 1975, video stills from *Survey 8 – Ivan Durrant*, National Gallery of Victoria production.
29. Ivan Durrant, *Chopping Block*, 1976, video stills from *Survey 8 – Ivan Durrant*, National Gallery of Victoria production.
30. Ivan Durrant, *Big Pig's Head*, 1978, oil on canvas (dimensions unknown).
31. Ivan Durrant, *Butcher Shop*, 1977–78, synthetic polymer resin, oil paint, enamel varnish, dimensions variable.
32. Herman Nitsch, image from *80<sup>th</sup> Action*, 1984
33. Damien Hirst, *Away from the Flock*, 1994, Steel, glass, lamb, formaldehyde solution, 96 x 149 x 51cm
34. Damien Hirst, *This little piggy went to market, this little piggy stayed home*, 1996, Steel, GRP composites, glass, pig formaldehyde solution, electric motor., 2 tanks, each 120 x 210 x 60cm
35. Carsten Höller and Rosemarie Trockel, *Ein Haus für Schweine und Menschen* (A House for Pigs and People), 1997, installation views, Documenta X, Kassel, Germany
36. Carsten Höller and Rosemarie Trockel, *Addina*, 1997, installation views, Cantieri Culturali, Alla Zisa, Palermo.
37. Yvette Watt, *Dark Presence*, 1999, oil on linen, 92 x 183cm
38. Yvette Watt, *Caught in the Light*, 2000, oil on linen, 111 x 101.5cm.
39. Yvette Watt, *Self Reflection*, 2000, oil on linen, 50 x 76cm
40. *Ofrenda para Diego y Frida* (Offering for Diego and Frida), and *Muy Machos de Borrachos* (Very Brave when Drunk), Day of the Dead dioramas (Mexico), c1995, wood, plaster, acrylic paint and paper, 6.2 x 10 x 4.5cm and 5.9 x 5.2 x 2.4cm.
41. Yvette Watt, *Alter-ego*, 2001, 21 x 29 x 31cm, MDF, Perspex, plastic sheep.

42. Yvette Watt, *Two Thousand and One*, 2001, cast polyurethane, enamel paint, MDF, 244 x 122cm.
43. Yvette Watt, *Impact*, 2001, plastic model animals, 200 x 100cm.
44. Yvette Watt, *Food for Thought (sheep, pig, bull)*, 2000, oil on board, 28 x 19cm.
45. Yvette Watt, *Clean-up*, 2001, oil on board, 30 x 45cm.
46. Yvette Watt, *Irreconcilable Differences (Mad Cow)*, 2001, oil on board, 30 x 45cm.
47. Yvette Watt, *Green Day*, 2001, oil on board, 33.8 x 35.5cm.
48. Yvette Watt, *Goat-scape*, 2001, oil on board, 30 x 16cm.
49. Yvette Watt, *Mad Mickey*, 2001, oil on linen, 76 x 50.5cm.
50. Yvette Watt, *Figure-Field (self portrait)*, 2001, oil on linen, 61 x 83cm.
51. Yvette Watt, *A Model Animal (cow)*, 2002, oil on linen, 40.5 x 56.5cm.
52. Yvette Watt, *A Model Animal (sheep)*, 2002, oil on linen, 40.5 x 56.5cm.
53. Yvette Watt, *A Model Animal (pig)*, 2002, oil on linen, 40.5 x 56.5cm.
54. Yvette Watt, *A Model Animal (chicken)*, 2002, oil on linen, 40.5 x 56.5cm.
55. Yvette Watt, *Dumb Animal (cow)*, 2003, oil on canvas, 180 x 270cm.
56. Yvette Watt, *Dumb Animal (pig)*, 2003, oil on canvas, 180 x 270cm.
57. Yvette Watt, *Dumb Animal (sheep)*, 2003, oil on canvas, 180 x 270cm.
58. Yvette Watt, *Dumb Animal (chicken)*, 2003, oil on canvas, 180 x 270cm.
59. Yvette Watt, *Nine Lives: simple science says don't emote*, 2001, oil on board, nine panels, each 19.5 x 15cm



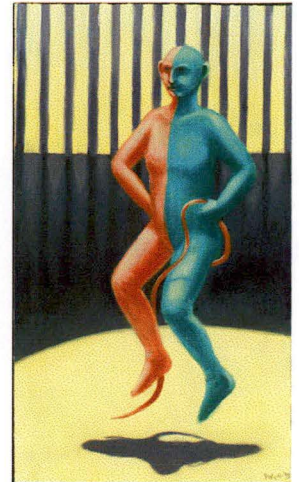
## APPENDIX TWO - OTHER WORKS



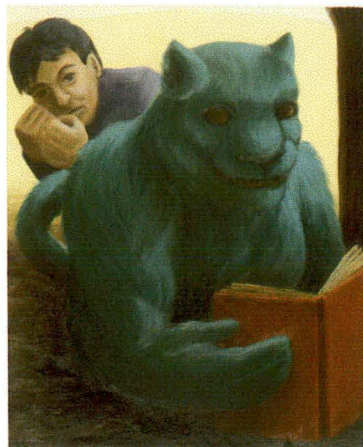
Yvette Watt  
*Tale of a Bald Man*,  
1999, Oil on board,  
40 x 21cm



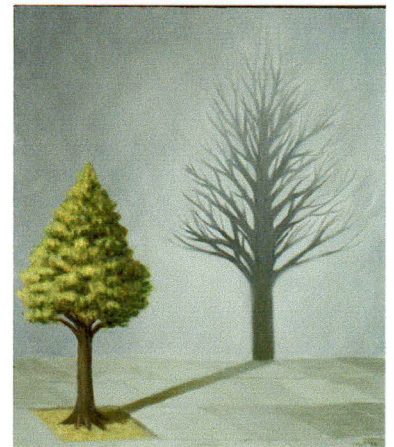
Yvette Watt, *Down to Earth*,  
1999, oil on board  
30 x 20.5cm



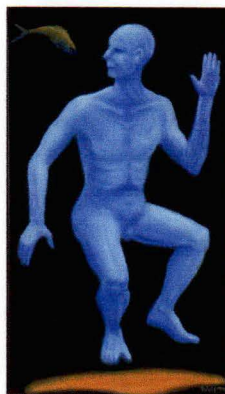
Yvette Watt, *Costume Drama*, 1999, oil on board  
26.5 x 15.5cm



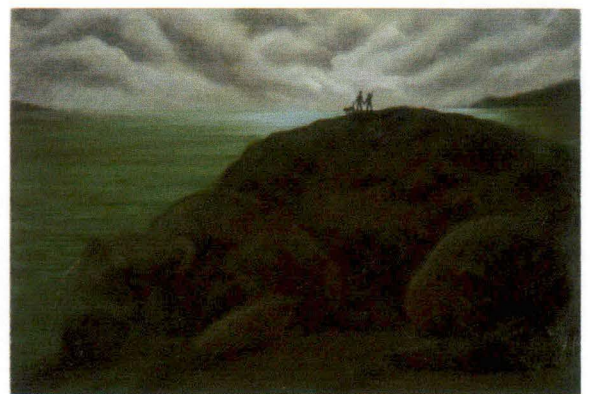
Yvette Watt, *A Literate Animal (after Goya)*, 1999  
Oil on board, 37.5 x 31cm



Yvette Watt, *A Shadow of Truth*, 1999, oil on board,  
35 x 29.5cm

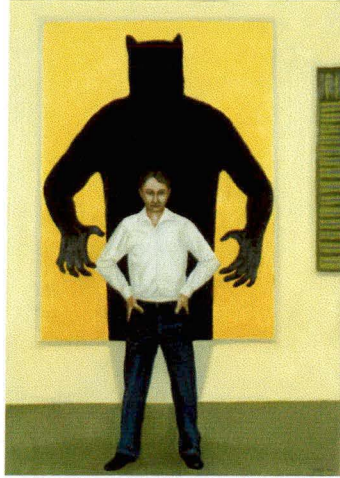


Yvette Watt  
*Suspense*, 1999, oil  
on board, 30 x 17cm.

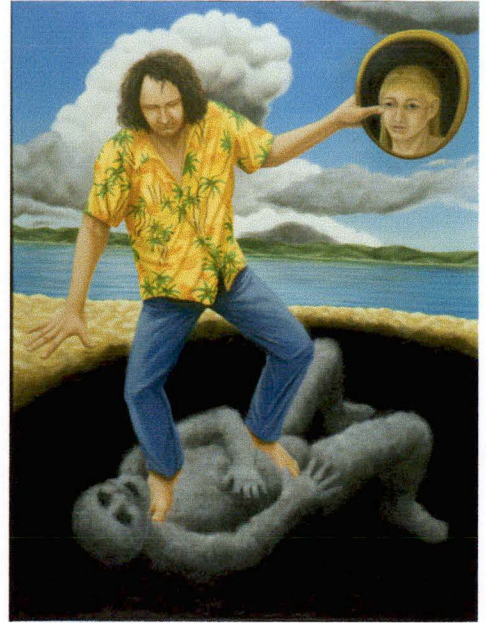


Yvette Watt, *Petra's Dream*, 1999, oil on  
board, 20.5 x 29.5cm





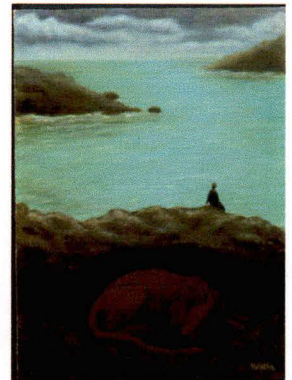
Above: Yvette Watt, *When You're Not looking*, 2000, Oil on board, 38 x 26.5cm



Right: Yvette Watt, *Keeping the Devil Down (St. Michael)*, 1999, oil on canvas, 183 x 137cm



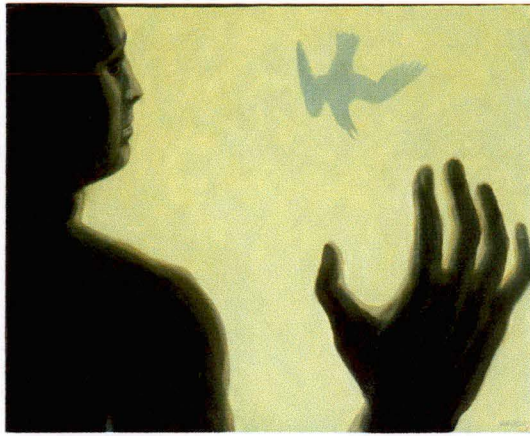
Yvette Watt, *Spot*, 1999, oil on board, 22 x 30cm



Yvette Watt, *Calm Before the Storm*, 2000 oil on board, 23 x 16cm



Yvette Watt, *Being Shadowed*, 2000, oil on board, 28 x 60cm

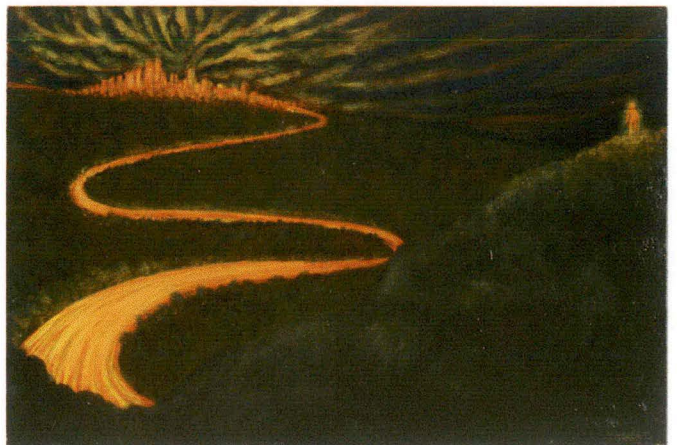
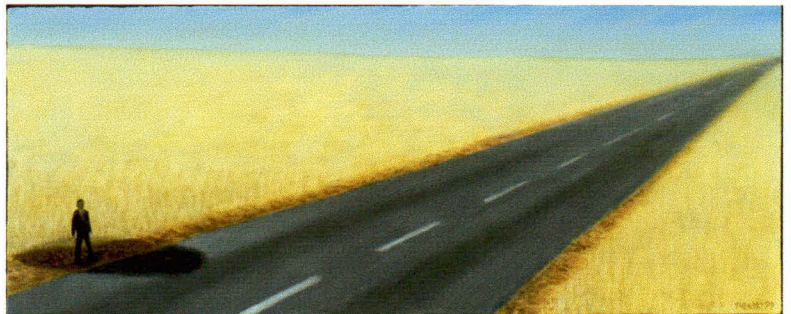


Above: Yvette Watt, *A Bird in the Hand*, 2000, oil on board, 26 x 32cm.

Right: Yvette Watt, *Falling*, 2000, oil on board, 60 x 17cm.

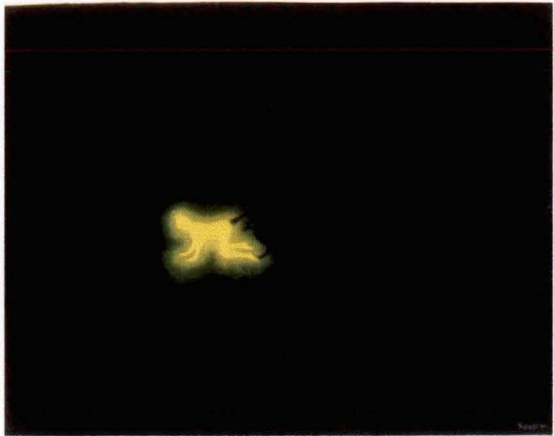


Below: Yvette Watt, *Long Road Ahead*, oil on board, 1999, 16 x 40.5cm



Yvette Watt: *Red River*, 2000, oil on canvas, 20 x 30cm





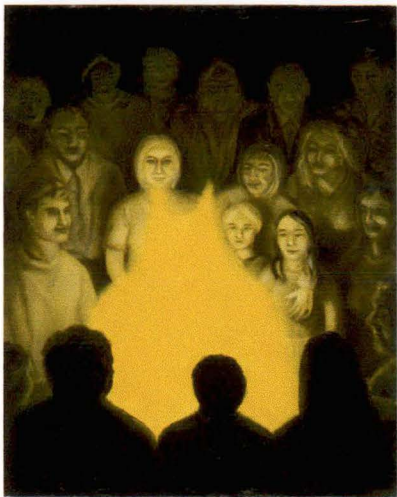
Above: Yvette Watt, *Defining Light*, 2001, oil on board, 23.5 x 30cm.



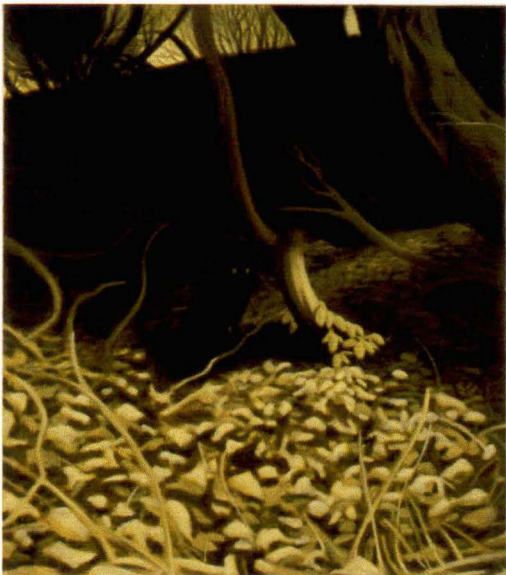
Right: Yvette Watt, *Sneak*, 2001, oil on board, 43 x 26cm.



Above: Yvette Watt, *Divided Attention*, 2001, oil on board, 26 x 35.5cm



Right: Yvette Watt, *Inner Glow*, 2001, oil on board, 36 x 28.5cm



Yvette Watt: *In the Shadows*, 2001, oil on linen, 96.5 x 84cm.



## APPENDIX THREE – CURRICULUM VITAE

**D.O.B.** 11<sup>th</sup> November 1963

### Education

- 1999 (current) Masters in Fine Art candidate, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania
- 1992 Lithography workshop, Australian Print Workshop, Victoria, Australia.
- 1988-90 Part-time studies in Printmaking (esp. lithography), Claremont School of Art, Western Australia.
- 1981-84 Bachelor of Education (Art), Curtin University of Technology

### Solo and Small Group Exhibitions

- 2001 *Shadowlands*, Artplace, Perth, Western Australia
- 2001 *Casting a Shadow*, Entrepot Gallery, School of Art at Hobart
- 2000 *Tales from the Dark Side*, Beaver Galleries, Canberra
- 1999 *Speak of the Devil*, Artplace, Perth Western Australia
- 1996 *Yvette Watt and Five Other Figurative Painters*, Festival of Perth Exhibition, Artplace, Perth W. Australia
- 1996 *6 WA Painters*, Beaver Galleries, Canberra, ACT
- 1993 *Bestial*, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Perth W. Australia
- 1993 *The Inquisitive Eye*, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Perth W. Australia (touring regional centres through Art on the Move)
- 1992 *Paintings and Prints*, Delaney Galleries, Perth W. Australia
- 1991 WA Week Exhibition (Hof Pottery ceramics decorated by four WA artists), Aherns Department store, Perth W. Australia
- 1990 *Prints and Drawings*, Delaney Galleries, Perth W. Australia
- 1988 *Buildings and Beasts*, Beach Gallery, Perth W. Australia

### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2002 Melbourne Art Fair 2002, Melbourne, Victoria
- 2002 *Committed to the present: 50 Years of the UWA Art Collection*, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of WA
- 2001 *Half Way There*, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania
- 2001 *Mine Own Executioner*, Mundaring Arts Centre, Western Australia
- 2000 Artplace Christmas Show, Artplace, Perth, W. Australia
- 2000 *H2O: A Miscellany of Works from the Kerry Stokes Collection*, (a Perth International Arts Festival Exhibition), Lawrence Wilson Gallery, WA.
- 1999 Redlands Westpac Art Prize, Mosman NSW
- 1999 Bunbury Biennale, Bunbury Regional Gallery, WA
- 1999 *Transitions*, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Annual Art Exhibition, The Church Gallery, Claremont WA
- 1999 Town of Vincent Invitation Art Award, Council Chambers, North Perth W. Australia
- 1998 *Gotham X 10*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, WA
- 1998 Inaugural Joondalup Invitation Art Award, Joondalup WA
- 1998 *Latin Perspectives*, Moores Building, Fremantle WA
- 1998 Albany Art Prize, Albany WA (highly commended)
- 1997 *Aspects of Fremantle*, Moores Building, Fremantle W. Australia
- 1997 Bunbury Biennale, Bunbury Regional Art Gallery, Bunbury WA
- 1997 *5 Years Artplace*, Artplace, Perth, Western Australia
- 1997 *The Censorship Show*, Artplace, Perth Western Australia
- 1996 *Figuration*, Art Gallery of Western Australia
- 1996 ACAF 5, Fifth Contemporary Art Fair, Melbourne, Victoria
- 1996 Alice Springs Annual Art Prize
- 1996 *Oddfellows* - the Essence of Figurative Art in Western Australia, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, W. Australia (touring regionally and interstate through Art on the Move)
- 1995 *Place and Perception*, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT
- 1994 *Presence*, Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle W. Australia
- 1994 ACAF 4, Fourth Contemporary Art Fair, Melbourne, Victoria
- 1993 *Summer Harvest*, Gorepani Gallery, Albany, W. Australia
- 1992 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Annual Art Exhibition, W. Australia

- 1992 Albany Art Competition, Albany, W Australia
- 1991 *Song of the Earth*, Delaney Galleries, Perth, W. Australia
- 1991 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Annual Art Exhibition, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
- 1991 *Out There*- Seven Young Western Australian Artists, Claremont School of Art, W. Australia
- 1990 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Print Exhibition, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
- 1989 *The 9 x 5 Show*, Undercroft Gallery, University of WA
- 1989 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Annual Art Exhibition, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
- 1988 The Beach Gallery Group Show, Beach Gallery, Perth, W. Australia
- 1988 Amnesty International Art Exhibition, New Collectables Gallery, Fremantle
- 1987 *Arts for the Forest*, Film and Television Institute, Fremantle, W.Australia
- 1984 *Printmakers '84*, Hayman Williams Gallery, Curtin University
- 1984 Bunbury Art Purchase Award, Bunbury Regional Art Gallery

#### Prizes and Awards

- 1999 Percent for Art Awards for Mural at Banksia Hill Detention Centre
- 1998 New Work (Projects) grant through ArtsWA for production of new work and exhibition of this work interstate.
- 1997 Bunbury Biennale Purchase Award
- 1997 Artflight grant through ArtsWA to fly to Eastern States
- 1995 Pre-selection for Moet and Chandon Australian Art Award
- 1995 Special Projects Grant, WA Dept. for the Arts, for exhibition at Beaver Galleries, Canberra
- 1994 Study, Exchanges, Secondments Grant, WA Dept. for the Arts, to visit print workshops overseas
- 1993 Conferences, Seminars and Special Events Grant, WA Dept, for the Arts, for *Inquisitive Eye* exhibition costs
- 1992 Special Projects Grant, WA Dept for the Arts, to attend lithography workshop at Australian Print Workshop, Melbourne, Victoria
- 1992 N.A.S.H.S. Print Prize, Albany Art Competition
- 1991 Best Painting, Albany Art Competition
- 1991 N.A.S.H.S. Print Prize, Albany Art Competition

#### Collections

Parliament House Canberra, Art Gallery of WA, University of WA, Edith Cowan University, WA School of Art and Design, Kerry Stokes, Royal Perth Hospital, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, BankWest, Town of Albany, Bunbury Regional Gallery, WA Bar Chambers, Legislative Assembly of WA, Minter Ellison Northmole Hale, Grafica Soruco Mexico, Sir James and Lady Sheila Cruthers, City of Wanneroo, Eddystone Investments.

#### Publications and Reviews

- 'A Fair to Remember', John McDonald, *Financial Review*, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2002
- Australian Painting*, Bernard Smith (with Terry Smith and Christopher Heathcote), Oxford University Press, Melbourne 2001
- 'Liquid Assets', Susan McCulloch-Uehlin, *The Weekend Australian*, June 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> 2001
- 'Glimpses of Art Lost', David Bromfield, *The West Australian*, June 16<sup>th</sup> 2001
- H20: A Miscellany of Works from the Kerry Stokes Collection*, exhibition catalogue, John Stringer, January 2000, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery
- 'Lurking in Dark Wit', Sonia Barron, *Canberra Times*, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2000
- 'Locals a Good Investment' David Bromfield, *The West Australian*, March 25 2000
- 'Humanimal Bond Devilishly Absorbing', David Bromfield, *The West Australian*, March 20 1999
- Beyond Good and Evil, Evi Ferrier, *Perth Weekly*, March 10-16 1999
- 'A Journey Through Art - The Kerry Stokes Collection', Anna Gray, *Art in Australia*, Spring 1996
- 'The Figurative Edge', Paul McGillick, *Art in Australia*, Spring 1996
- 'In the Picture', *Canberra Times*, November 1996
- Oddfellows* - exhibition catalogue, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, 1996
- 'Tattered Treasures...', Nikki Miller, *The West Australian*, February 28 1996
- 'Showing Six...', Sonia Barron, *Canberra Times*, February 17 1996
- 'Perth's Dreamscape...', Paul McGillick, *Financial Review*, February 9 1996

*6 WA Painters*- exhibition catalogue, Artplace/Beaver Galleries, 1996  
*Artists in Residence*, Richard Woldendorp and John Stringer, Sandpiper Press, Perth, 1995  
*Place and Perception*, exhibition catalogue, Parliament House Canberra, 1995  
*Beastial*, exhibition catalogue, Sandra Murray, October 1993, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery  
*The Inquisitive Eye*, exhibition catalogue, Paola Anselmi, 1993, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery  
*The Good Fight*, Vol 1, issues 1 and 2 (Image only)  
 'On Show', David Bromfield, *The West Australian*, June 6 1992  
 'On Show', David Bromfield, *The West Australian*, June 8 1991  
 'On Show', David Bromfield, *The West Australian*, January 12 1991  
 "Raven" magazine, Vol 1 No 1 1990, (image only)

### **Commissions, Projects and Travel**

2002 Mural Commission for New Town High School, Hobart, under the Art for Public Buildings Scheme  
 1996 Mural Commission for Banksia Hill juvenile detention centre, Western Australia - in collaboration with Indra Geidans and Richard Gunning, under the percent for art scheme  
 1994/5 12 months travelling through Europe, USA, Mexico and Central America, including a 6 month period living and working in Guatemala, and a three week period producing lithographs at Grafica Soruco, Mexico  
 1991 Westrail Poster for the Northern Suburbs Transport System  
 1991 Poster design for "Rat's Revenge" benefit gig  
 1990 Kaleidoscope Printers calendar illustration  
 1990 Poster Design for "Outrage" benefit gig  
 1990 Poster Design, "Hey and How" benefit gig (with Petra Kayser), University Campaign Against Racial Exploitation  
 1990 Poster Design, "Rock for the Animals" benefit gig

### **Teaching**

1999- cont. Lecturer in painting and drawing, Tasmanian School of Art University of Tasmania  
 1999 – 2002 Art tutor, Risdon Prison  
 1995-9 Lecturer in Painting, Drawing, Printmaking, and Design, Western Australian School of Art and Design (TAFE)  
 1999 Tutor in Mosaic, University of WA Summer School Programme  
 1999 Tutor in Mosaic, Tresillian Community Centre School Holiday Programme  
 1996 (1<sup>st</sup> Term) Printmaking Tutor, Gallery Art School, Art Gallery of WA  
 1992-3 Lecturer in Painting, Drawing, Cultural Studies and Professional Practices, Associate Diploma in Visual Arts course (through Edith Cowan University), Great Southern Regional College, Albany  
 1992-3 Art Tutor, Albany Regional Prison  
 1991-2 Art Tutor, Vancouver Arts Centre School Holiday Programme, Albany  
 1989-90 Painting Tutor, Art Gallery of WA School Holiday Programme  
 1990 Painting Tutor, Applecross Senior High School Special Art Programme  
 1988 Guest Tutor, Linocutting Techniques, Curtin University  
 1986-7 Art Tutor, Bandyup Women's Prison  
 1985-6 Art Tutor, Applecross senior High School Special Art Programme  
 1985 Art Teacher (part-time), Foothills School  
 1985 Art Teacher (full time), Churchlands Senior High School

### **Other Relevant Employment**

2003 – cont. Project Officer, Research and Development, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania.  
 2000 – 2003 Art Forum Coordinator, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania.  
 1989-90 Gallery Attendant, Art Gallery of WA  
 1988 Display Artist, Katanning Mill Museum, Katanning  
 1987 Display Artist, WA Medical Museum, King Edward Hospital Complex  
 1986-7 Ceramics instructor, Particpark Programme, City of Stirling

## APPENDIX FOUR - BIBLIOGRAPHY

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John Berger, 'Why Look at Animals?', *Selected Essays*, Bloomsbury, London, 2001.

Bernstock, Judith E., 'Classical Mythology in Twentieth Century Art: An overview of a Humanistic Approach', *Artibus et Historiae*, No. 27, vol 14 1993, pp 153 – 83.

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